MY REMINISCENCES OF SARDAR PATEL

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VOLUME I

V. SHANKAR

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Preface

It was a unique privilege and honour to have served Sardar Patel for four years in a position of responsibility and confidence, particularly when there was no mental reservation on either side, and trust was freely and generously given. In retrospect and with an appropriate sense of modesty I am prepared to say that the nature and conditions of work then brought out the best in me. At the same time events moved so swiftly and in such a tempo and were so demanding of time and talent that even though there was not much time to keep a record of those events they left a vividness of impressions which even now appear before the mind's eye like a film serial.

The cult of diary-keeping has few votaries in this country. Fortunately for us Maniben, Sardar's modest and self-denying daughter, is a devotee of that cult and has kept a reasonable record of daily happenings of those days—much more detailed during the latter period. Apart from her diary, the correspondence that has seen the light of the day, unpublished correspondence with so many persons, and notes in official records, Sardar Patel left no writings which bear the stamp of authenticity or which could speak for him. Ever since his death I have all along carried within me a tremendous burden of responsibility as one of the two (the other being Maniben) persons who, in close and intimate contact with him for the greater part of the day shared his thoughts and memories, were aware of his joys and sorrows, acquired knowledge of his ideas and ideology and the background of the policies he formulated, and had insight into the knowledge of his relations with his contemporaries and his reaction to contemporary events.

For years I have been wanting to take the public into confidence in regard to what I know of those eventful, momentous and historic times when India's destiny changed from colonialism to freedom, from unity to partition, from division to integration, and from dominion to republic and when the foundations of its freedom were laid and the process of consolidation of that freedom began in right earnest. But for one reason or another mostly connected with my official position it was not possible to do so. When I began writing my account three years ago after I laid down my office as a member of the Administrative Reforms Commission, it was as a solo effort. It has been such an effort all through barring the assistance I got from my personal staff and that incomparable colleague

of mine of the old States Ministry days, Mr. C. Ganesan, who was then Deputy Secretary, and from Maniben both personally and through her diary. I should like to acknowledge my debt and obligation to them, particularly to Maniben who supplemented my recollections with faithful adherence to her diary and facts. I am also obliged to Mr. N. S. Vaidyanathan, now Director in the Ministry of Commerce but at that time Principal Personal Assistant to Sardar and my main side in Sardar's Office; he went through the manuscript and gave his suggestions for improvement out of the vast store-house of his knowledge of those days.

Sardar has been rightly credited with a rare economy of words and a keen realisation of the value of time. But it is seldom realised how watchful he was about the utilisation of public money. Despite his multifarious official and non-official responsibilities, the large number of official and non-official correspondents and voluminous correspondence, official papers and records with which we had to deal, his office consisted of only myself, four Personal Assistants and during later days a small Section mostly for purposes of despatch and record. Maniben was of course an indispenable, honorary, zealous vigilant, and conscientious sharer of our responsibilities. The ten volumes of correspondence which have been published will impart some idea of the volume, variety, complexity and high quality of the matters with which we all had to deal. It is with a sense of satisfaction that we recall that not only was there no instance of leakage but Sardar was never caught on the wrong foot. Of course the prime credit for it goes to the Great Man himself.

The reminiscences of those days which I have recorded are recollections. I thought it best to record them as they came from out of memory and time. Later these were tested against such records as I had kept and tallied with entries in Maniben's diary. I am happy to state that comparatively few emendations, additions or deletions were found necessary. I decided during the course of writing to order the reminiscences in such a way as to fill the gap caused by the absence of Sardar's own version of events and occurrences and to keep myself as much as possible in the background. It was inevitable that my recollections should be expressed in terms of a historical perspective; as a keen student of history it was impossible to resist the temptation; besides, for the current generation to follow the events of those days such a perspective, I thought, it would be useful.

With the release of this book a great deal of responsibility and obligation is off my shoulders. The responsibility refers to being the repository of knowledge and information, the imparting of which was necessary to secure fair and just assessment of the Sardar at work in relation to contemporary personalities, events and situations. The obligation relates to speaking in my own humble way for a towering personality which preferred to keep to itself and yet has left an indelible mark on the pages of Indian History. His contribution to that history will rank with that of some of the greatest figures that move in its long and

remarkable pageant. I only hope and pray that my account will impart some life to the mere skeleton of historical events which are generally public property and will serve to recall the situations and atmosphere in which so much was achieved by comparatively few in such a short time.

New Delhi
6 October 74

V. SHANKAR

One

Introduction

IT WAS the midnight of 14/15 December 1950. The city was Bombay, where the Sardar was held in great esteem and to which he was instinctively drawn during his last few days on earth. The place was his wonted room in Birla House, the scene of history-making ever since the Birlas became associated with Gandhiji and Sardar in the cause of India's freedom. Sardar was lying in an oxygen tent under the vigilant care of Dr. Misra who had known no rest ever since Sardar's arrival on 11 December. After a restless two hours, the effects of uraemia, he had fallen into a deep slumber as a result of a powerful tranquilliser given to him but the sounds of his laboured breathing filled us with apprehension and anxiety. Dr. Gilder and Dr. Nathubhai Patel, who had attended on him all along during his illness frequently came to his bedside and their expression foretold the coming tragedy. The night was slowly but irrevocably marching towards the twilight hour ; Sardar's soul seemed to be struggling to free itself from its mortal bonds. At about 5 a.m., all seemed lost and the steel frame of his body seemed to be collapsing like 'wornout fetters which the soul was trying to break and throw away'. I was, at the time, telephoning Delhi to prepare the Prime Minister and others for the fast approaching end. Suddenly I was summoned to his presence ; a temporary miracle had happened. He had revived and was asking for Maniben and me. While the doctors and nurses attended on him, we stood there silent, grief-stricken and bewildered. He turned his eyes on us and then they drooped. A few more moments and he was engaged in the proverbial last struggle with death. How graphically that struggle has been portrayed by Browning of whose lines I was painfully reminded :

> To feel the fog in my throat,
> When the snows begin and the blasts denote,
> I am nearing the place,
> The power of the night, the press of the storm,
> The post of the foe ;
> When he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
> Yet, the strong man must go.

I was seeing that struggle before my very eyes. It lasted three hours, then in a last gasp of breath, the lamp of his life was extinguished.

The voice that had thundered for his country in every crisis and the life that had achieved so much for its stability and permanence were stilled for ever. A mountain of sorrow and grief appeared to be crushing me under its weight, but I mustered sufficient strength to convey the news on the telephone to Delhi and then quietly retired to a corner to lament and reflect for a while, all by myself, as I had done during some moments of loneliness that I had snatched since midnight.

In those few hours, I surveyed in kaleidoscopic fashion rather than in a connected serial, not only the momentous four years and more of my association with Sardar which had unhappily come to a close, but also the years before that which I had gone through as though to prepare myself for the great experience. Ever since my childhood I had refused stoutly to have any idols except my parents. My mother was a typical Hindu wife in a big joint family ; by her sacrifices she had kept the joint family together and had endowed her children with a spirit of sacrifice and devotion to others in preference to themselves. My father, Rai Bahadur Avadh Behari Lal was a flourishing legal practitioner of Pratapgarh (Oudh) who, resisting the temptation of moving to Lucknow and Allahabad, despite the friendly advice of his stalwart friends like Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Justice Wazir Hasan and Sir Surendra Nath Sen, had dedicated his time to the profession and to municipal and other public service.

Under the influence of my parents and the religious background of my grandparents, I had become well-versed in religious lore which had inculcated in me a spirit of tolerance and sacrifice. I had also acquired a familiarity with poetry, literature and art which at my age surprised the many distinguished visitors to our house. I remember that I felt particularly happy to have been singled out for praise from Pandit Motilal Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir C. Y. Chintamani and Justice Bishweshwar Nath Srivastava, later Chief Judge of the Lucknow Chief Court. My father often called me to his Chamber to help him to take out his books and other papers which he required for the preparation of his cases. I loved to hear him on legal matters particularly during the discussions he held with his clients and colleagues. The knowledge which I thereby acquired sometimes baffled even my father. But, notwithstanding all this, he and his friends and even the elderly village folk, with whom I was quite popular, predicted for me a future in the I. C. S., which during those days, always evoked a certain measure of deference and respect.

About this time, my district was pulsating with political life, thanks to the *Kisan Sabha* movement, of which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a prominent sponsor in the early days of his political career. I remember that when Gandhiji came to my town with Pandit Motilal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Shaukat Ali, they addressed a huge public meeting. My father, who was a prominent political figure since the days of the partition of Bengal agitation when he took his Swadeshi pledge which he observed to the end, was on the dais and I joined him. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, hardly looking older than a college student, and the late

Pandit Gauri Shankar Misra were sitting close to me. Not till then did I realise in what esteem Pandit Motilal held my father. In his public speech, he lavishad encomiums on him which he freely repeated again after six years when he visited the District in connection with the Swaraj Party Campaign. During these visits, though my father was in the opposite political camp, he made it a point to greet him and meet him and it was my proud privilege to offer *pans* to Panditji Among other memories of events which affected me profoundly are the visits of Annie Besant after her release from incarceration when my father presented me to her, and similarly of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Shri Vithalbhai Patel.

It was in this atmosphere of domestic felicity and professional, civic and political service that I pursued my student career. It was not surprising, therefore, that as a college student, unknown to the police, I was a silent sympathiser of the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930 and a participant in several demonstrations and *hartals* that were staged on the deaths of Bhagat Singh and others, and nearer home when during the Meerut Conspiracy days, P. C. Joshi was arrested in Holland Hall. By upbringing I should have taken to a professional and public career. But Destiny took a different turn, and contrary to my expectations, I passed my I. C. S. examination in Delhi in 1931.

My first appointment was in far-off Dharwar in November 1933. Placed in a strange country aimd strange people, with an unfamiliar language, and for the first time, working under the discipline of a highly organised Civil Service, I felt somewhat diffident and unsure of myself. But my two years at Oxford had made a great and profound impression on me. Having lost my parents and elder brother during this period, I had become rather stoic and philosophic in my outlook. I was, therefore, less of a rebel and more of a seasoned man of the world. I applied myself to the task of administration with zeal and vigour. From there, my career has taken me to Dhulia, Poona, Bombay, Delhi and back and forth.

Personalities, events and accidents shape the course of a man's life as they do that of a nation. Personalities affect and are affected by events ; accidents sometimes give a new turn to the course of events as they do to the development of the personality. As I surveyed my association with Sardar on that fateful night, I could not help thinking backward in terms of these triple influences on my own career. I could not but think, for instance, of the accident in official life which brought me in close touch with my esteemed friend who was like an elder brother to me, the late M. J. Desai, who noticed in me certain qualities which he thought worth bringing to the notice of Shri Morarji Desai. I joined his Department in the Bombay Secretariat in 1939. I owe to Shri Morarji Desai many lessons in the art of dealing with problems of administration, but more than anything else, I owe to him the recommendation he made to Sardar about me when Sardar was looking out for a Private Secretary. In fact, before I met Sardar, if I was attached to anyone, it was to Shri Morarji Desai. However, even then I owe my actual appointment to an accident. I had been ear-

marked as a replacement of a member of the Indian Delegation to the Peace Conference in September 1946 and was to have flown to Paris ; I had been asked for by Sardar but given up on that account. But thanks to a change of tactics by the U.S.S.R., the Peace Conference ended suddenly and I had to stay behind. That made the Home Secretary A. E. Porter, I. C. S., revive the proposal and after a critical sizing-up to which I shall revert later, Sardar accepted me.

I reflected on this course of events which was now part of memory. I then wondered how I had endeared myself to Sardar and he to me in a manner that I had never experienced and few perhaps could. By upbringing and temperament, I was a free-thinker and of a shy and retiring disposition. While in service I had learnt to be disciplined and restrained, I had prized my objectivity and sense of fair-play and justice. I worshipped my parents, but otherwise I had always been an iconoclast and as such incapable of submitting myself heart and soul to any living personality. Some of the greatest contemporary figures including saints, politicians and literary stalwarts have left me cold. How did it come about then that I attached myself so wholeheartedly to this man of iron whom I had not known until four years before his death ? For four years and more I was part of his little world of three which constituted his *sanctum sanctorum*. It is to this world he would retire in his most disturbed moments ; he would reveal to us two—Maniben and myself—his mind in a manner he would reveal to none else. During that period we shared his joys and sorrows his affections and afflictions, his disappointments and achievements.

When I first saw Sardar, it was a mere glimpse of him during his visit to Allahabad where I was studying for my B.A. He was staying with Shri Purshotam Das Tandon but was a frequent visitor to Swaraj Bhavan, the residence of Pandit Motilal Nehru. He had come fresh from his triumphs of Bardoli. A select band of students always thronged Swaraj Bhavan on such occasions. I happened to be one of the spectators who went in not by invitation but out of curiosity. Sardar came out to meet us ; he looked a scion of sturdy peasant stock and true to type he scolded the students for living away from the villages which constituted real India. Frankly speaking, as a town-lover I was not too happy at the scolding we received. Little did I realise that one day this hardy peasant type would emerge as one of the topmost leaders with a rare breath of vision and outlook and, even more, a rare grasp of the needs of his country including towns and villages alike.

Later, when working in the Bombay Secretariat I used to see him traversing the length of the Marine Drive footpath, always accompanied by Maniben and two or three others. Only once did I venture to go quite close to him. I then noticed that the prominent feature of his earlier years—the moustache—was no longer there, that there was a noticeable stoop of the shoulders as against the erect frame, which he had carried with rough dignity. Sardar, I learnt through newspaper accounts, was in charge of the Parliamentary programme of the Congress. I had read news-

paper reports of the way he had met Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's opposition to the Parliamentary programme of the Congress at the A. I. C. C. Session in Poona, the manner in which he had organised the Congress electioneering in the 1937 elections, the resoluteness and astuteness which he had dealt with N.B. Khare at Nagpur, and the vigilance and ability with which he kept an eye on the Congress Ministries in those provinces where they had assumed power in 1937. All these achievements had cast a halo round his head and my attitude to him as I stood watching him pass by, was one of reverence and awe.

Nevertheless I still secretly nursed a greater measure of admiration for Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, which I had formed in my childhood when he came to my District and later when I used to hear him speak at Pratapgarh and at student gatherings during my college days at Allahabad. In fact, my brief glimpse of him at Swaraj Bhavan in December 1937 when I had gone there to meet Shri Ranjit Pandit at the instance of my late lamented friend Nawab Sahib of Savanur, had drawn me to Jawaharlal Nehru even closer, and even though I had just a sentence or two of conversation with him, I seemed to preserve them in the treasure-house of my memory as a priceless gem.

Then came the war and with it the separation from Morarji Desai. I felt it intensely and wrote a letter to him full of sorrow to which he returned a soothing and appreciative reply. I was soon transferred to the Finance Department where I had my difficulties with Mr. Knights, the Financial Adviser to the Governor. But unfortunately for me, the Governor, Sir Roger Lumley, came to my rescue and when the call came for me from the Government of India in September 1941, I was released for deputation with the Home Department. I left Bombay sad and yet happy. I was coming nearer U.P.—my home-province—and was glad to leave the Financial Adviser behind. But I was sorry that I was going to miss the opportunity of serving another Congress Ministry in Bombay. The chances of a Congress Ministry at the Centre then seemed so remote that I thought I was destined in the course of the next four years to serve a bureaucratic anti-Congress regime at Delhi. I was full of apprehensions and was sometimes seized with fear lest I should again fall foul of my immediate superiors in office. But these apprehensions and fears were soon laid to rest when I discovered in Sir Reginald Maxwell, the Home Member and Mr. Conran-Smith the Home secretary, men of good judgement who appreciated merit irrespective of race, and who encouraged initiative and a sense of responsibility without regard for any particular shade of opinion.

Under the benevolent care of these two senior officers I flourished in Delhi, where I was dealing with the public and foreign side of the Home Department. Fortunately for me I was never called upon to deal with the internal side, which concerned itself with measures to combat the Quit India Movement. Even so, I always longed for the Congress to come to office and secretly admired the valiant efforts that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru were making to come to an arrangement with

Cripps during his famous Mission. In fact, I felt rather annoyed with Sardar at the reports I heard that he was rather out of sympathy with the move for the acceptance of the Cripps Plan. I was of course not aware, as I am now, that Linlithgow and Amery were also doing their best to torpedo the Cripps Plan. The hopes of a Congress Ministry at the Centre, momentarily raised, were dashed to the ground by the announcement of the breakdown of talks. My annoyance with Sardar for his part in the Cripps negotiations was further accentuated when I read his famous declaration at Ahmedabad about the Quit India Movement and felt strongly that the Congress was thereby not only missing the bus but also helping to forge more strongly the British-Muslim alliance which was bound to prove disastrous to the country. I had liked the statement which Gandhiji had made after his visit to Simla on the outbreak of the war and was hoping that the Congress would sometime or the other come to a settlement with the British which would save India both from Hitlerite fascism and British Imperialism-cum-Muslim Communalism. To my mind the Quit India Movement put back the chances of this eventuality further still.

However, the die was cast and we were the silent and helpless spectators of a wave of frustration and bitterness sweeping over the country. The people were left bewildered as if stranded in a rudderless boat. British officialdom which dreaded the advent of the popular element in the Government, at least whilst the war was on, was happy at the outcome. A counter-propaganda of calumny and hate was let loose and the country seemed to resign itself to the continuance of British rule for years to come. By 1945 the war was over ; by that time, I had risen one step in the official hierarchy and, even though a demand had come for my reversion to Bombay at the end of my three years' tenure, Mr. Conran-Smith felt that I was needed for some more time; I, therefore, secured another year's extension which was further extended by a year and subsequently by another six months.

The second and third periods of extension saw far-reaching changes in the ruling set-up both in India and in Britain. The Labour Party was returned by a majority in the United Kingdom and its success was followed by a series of attempts to grapple with the Indian problem in a liberal spirit. The most momentous step was the despatch of the Cabinet Mission which conducted a series of delicate negotiations with political parties and finally issued their Plan of 16 May 1946. I followed the course of these negotiations through newspaper reports; and from our own official contacts we got to know something more. It was then that I came to know that Sardar had parted company with Gandhiji on this issue and that he was instrumental in saving both the Congress and the Mission from registering another failure; Jinnah never forgave Sardar for that astute move but Cripps and Pethick-Lawrence were always grateful. As far as I was concerned, I felt happy that at last Sardar had taken a constructive attitude on India's future and made a realistic appreciation of the country's needs.

Thereafter, it was only a question of time for the Congress to assume office. There was an air of expectancy and a feeling of curiosity in Government circles. We were all rather impatient of delay and welcomed the announcement that the Congress nominees were to assume office to the exclusion of League representatives. This development was due to Jinnah's intransigence over whether the Congress had or had not accepted the Plan and was thus qualified to join the Government. By that time, I had been earmarked to join the Peace Conference Delegation in Paris. The Peace Conference had been going on from day to day without any end in sight. Some of our delegates required replacement and I was chosen as one of the substitutes. I made ready to go and was on the point of departure when Russia changed its tactics; the early end of the conference seemed reasonably certain and no substitutes were required.

In the meantime, amid general acclaim, qualified only by League dissent, the Congress representatives took office as members of the Executive Council of the Governal-General on 2nd September 1946. Sardar took the portfolio of Home and Information and Broadcasting. I had then my first close glimpse of him when we were all summoned to his room and were presented to him by our Home Secretary, Mr. A.E. Porter. I remember that at that very first interview, Sardar gave me the impression of strength. In a few well-chosen words he told us that he would soon get better acquainted with us and our work and that he was looking forward to a fruitful period of mutual cooperation in the great national task of administering the country. We then returned to our rooms happy at having got, at the head of our department, a person of such eminence who in his very first utterance had not referred at all to past regrets and bitterness but only to the future collaboration. I was somewhat unhappy at the thought that I was to leave so soon for Paris after these auspicious beginnings and would not enjoy the first flush of excitement and enthusiasm.

Sardar settled down to his new responsibilities in a methodical and businesslike fashion. It was a new experience for him to deal with files and he soon began to feel overwhelmed by their variety and volume and the complexity of the material they contained. The strain of this work in addition to the political negotiations which were still going on and the public relations which had to be maintained began to tell upon Sardar and he felt the need of a Private Secretary. One or two names were suggested but Porter took the line that a Private Secretary should be from his own Department. It was during this search that Sardar sought Morarji Desai's help and during a telephone conversation the latter mentioned my name. Sardar asked Porter for me but was told that I was already to leave for Paris on a Mission, the work of which, if approved, might mark me out for a foreign service career. Sardar's reaction was characteristic; he said 'in that case I would not like to stand in his way and will look for another.'

There the matter seemed to end. It was only when one or two other substitutes were passed over and my visit to Paris was cancelled that Por-

ter broached the subject once more. Sardar had failed to find a suitable person and when told that I was available he decided to size me up He told Porter to ask me to contact Maniben. Porter came to my room immediately thereafter and gave me the glad tidings. I was taken completely by surprise and for a time wondered whether I would pass the test of such a great and stern man whose toughness was proverbial. I remember having shared my diffidence with Porter who encouraged me to hope for the best on the basis of the good work I had already done.

I was then on the qui vive and all excitement. I telephoned Maniben the next day at Birla House where Sardar was staying. I was invited to lunch the same day. Without even a moment's thought as to whether it would be an appropriate dress for the occasion—many in my place would have donned a readymade Khadi suit—I put on my silk suit and tie and then left rather nervous and uncertain. I reached Birla House and was ushered into the main drawing room where Sardar, Maniben and Ghanshyam Das Birla were sitting. I bowed my head a little and did my *namaskars* to all three of them ; I could feel that three pairs of eyes were on me trying to size me up. I felt a bit shy and took my seat on a low divan. A barrage of questions then started which did not cease until after lunch. It embraced all possible relevant questions that could have been asked and came from all there of them. It covered my antecedents, my family, my official career, my current duties, my record during the various Congress movements and my attitude on economic and other current problems. I had never faced a cross-examination of this type after my first conversation with my first Collector, Mr. Brown, who was, however, more anxious to find my political sympathies than any other aspects of my life. I had then openly confessed to him my administration for Jawaharlalji and his great father and told him of my father's association with them. That rather made him like me. On this occasion I felt that a similar result was produced by the statement that I made to Maniben in reply to one of the questions that fortunately I never had to send a Congressman to jail during the thirteen years of my service. However, it was the cumulative result of the way I had stood up to the barrage of questions that helped Sardar to make up his mind. He told me at the end of the one and a half hour non-stop cross-examination that I could join as his Private Secretary as soon as possible.

I was no doubt happy at this pleasant end to one of the most inconvenient periods I have ever passed through but the experience had made me dread Sardar even more. I did not so much mind the task-matter that he revealed himself to be ; I was not affraid of tackling any task myself but I was rather uneasy about my chances of satisfying Sardar in respect of the varied responsibilities that he held and of understanding fully the great mind within the massive exterior that his head displayed to such Roman perfection. However, I submitted myself to my Destiny in a spirit of calm resignation feeling somewhat consoled at the thought that Providence, which had prevented me from fulfilling my wish for a foreign service

career and made me acceptable to such a man of position and strength, must have meant something good, something benevolent and promising. It was in this frame of mind that I left Birla House little realising that in that hour of destiny was born a fruitful period of service which would form the most eventful chapter of my life.

The pensive mood I was in on learning from Sardar that he had approved of me for the post of Private Secretary soon changed into that of subdued pleasure and by the time I reached home I was the same care-free and cheerful person that I am in my own circle. I mentally carried out calculations as to how much time it would take me to wind up the work in hand and finding that it would take about a week, I selected without any astrological consultations a date in the last week of September for taking over charge of my new post.

The next morning Porter came smiling to my room after his daily interview with Sardar, congratulated me and wished me well in my new post. I thanked him and told him that I needed his prayers more than his congratulations. He put me at ease and told me that during the three weeks of his contact with Sardar he had found it very pleasant to work with him. He had shown determination, realism and imagination in the handling of matters. He never resented advice ; in fact, he wanted to familiarise himself with as many aspects of a problem as possible. He was a man of few words, but then he knew his mind and, therefore, did not need many to clothe his thoughts in. He had no doubt that I, with my experience, would find it very pleasant and interesting to work under him. I then settled down to the task of winding up my work. I am generally uptodate in my work ; the problem of arrears did not, therefore, worry me. It was the question of a redistribution of work for I had to retain for six months the 'foreign' side of my work and the disposal of important pending matters. I took about a week to settle all this and was ready to assume my new responsibilities on the scheduled date.

That day dawned the same way as any other ; I followed my usual routine and prepared to leave for 1, Aurangzeb Road, where Sardar had by now shifted. I left my home full of trepidation and somewhat uneasy. But what Porter had told me and what I had seen of Sardar at lunch filled me with courage and determination. I arrived at my destination at about 9.30 a.m. thinking I would have to formally send in my card, seek an appointment and then ascertain from him the various preliminaries to my regular work. Instead, I found the peon standing at the entrance ; he told me that Sardar was waiting for me in his office.

Sardar's house was modelled on the style of the Council Chamber or the Parliament House as it was known later. It was a circular structure with an open courtyard in the centre and a gallery right round it ; sets of rooms ran round the gallery which served as an excellent verandah too. I hurriedly went in through the gallery and reached his office room on the south-east corner. He was with Maniben in the verandah but as he heard my footsteps he came into the office room to greet me almost with open

arms. As soon as he saw me, he said enthusiastically, 'So you have come. I made my salutations and then stood silently for a moment. Sardar asked me if it was too early for me. I told him, 'No, I generally get up at 6 and am ready at 7.30 in the morning.' He said, 'I thought you were like the Burra Sahibs who got up at 8 and took thier tea and other consequential routine rather leisurely.' I told him that ever since my childhood days I was used to getting up early and that my grandfather, who had a religious bent of mind and whose room I shared, used to wake me up at 4.30 so that I could be ready and study early in the morning ; he used to say that one remembered much more of what one read at that hour. Sardar said, 'Yes, but that is the time I go out for my morning walks and dispose of so many visitors.' For a moment, I was aghast but soon I steadied myself and said that I wished I could also go back to the habits of my grandfather's days.

By this time, the open-hearted manner in which he received me and the good-humoured way in which we had conversed had put me entirely at ease and I could change the topic of my own accord to my work. He pointed to the waiting bundles of files, about twenty five or thirty of them and said that, in the midst of his preoccupations, he had been unable to dispose them of and kept them pending my assumption of charge He also told me that at times he felt quite at sea with the files as he had got out of the habit of dealing with them, though he had done so during his professional career as the President of the Ahmedabad Municipality, but that Maniben was helping him and he had managed to keep abreast of his work except during the last very busy week.

I had a hurried glance at the pending volume of formidable-looking files and silenty felt that, since he must be dealing only with important papers, it would take me three or four days to study them. I then asked him what was required of me. He told me that he would like me to go through them, discuss with him and then take orders in terms of the discussion. He said that, after a week or so of this procedure, if he found it needed a change, he would tell me so. But he would like to read all reports, Cabinet Summaries and other important papers himself, so I should put up these papers to him or give them to Maniben ; generally he would try to dispose them of that very day, but in any case not later than the next morning. He then told me that unless I liked to have another room I could work in the same room as he and, if at any time he needed solitude or privacy either he could go out in the verandah or the adjoining lawn or I could go out as the occasion demanded.

He then asked me if I would like to follow any particular hours of work. By that time, I had become so taken in by his frank and helpful manner that I felt completely at home with him. I said that office hours set no limit to the working hours and the latter depended on the day's work that had to be done. He said that this attitude suited his requirements and that he would expect me to come at about 9 a.m. and in the evening I could go away whenever I felt that work would let me.

He then turned to the files at which I occasionally cast side-glances, as though I wished to see that fairly large area vacant. Hs guessed my innermost thoughts and asked me when I would be ready with them. I said I would take another half-hour to familiarise myself with office matters and would then settle down to work. I left him and he began to peruse the newspapers. I saw how confidential papers were kept in custody and met his personal staff, of which N.S. Vaidyanathan of Information and Broadcasting Ministry, was the chief person. Thereafter, I sat down to study the papers and finished them by lunch time. I then left for lunch. When I returned I attended to a few more details. By that time, about, 2 00 p.m. Sardar was ready and I took all the files to him. He said with some surprise and interest, 'What ! Have you finished all these in such a short time.' I said, 'Yes, Sir. I think I have studied them as much as was necessary though I cannot say that I have read every single page' He then sat down and within two hours we finished the whole lot. I took short pencil notes of instructions on each case and after the last one had been dealt with, I returned to my room to dictate notes or write them out in my own hand. At tea time I was about to leave for my home when Maniben came to me and said that Bapu wasc alling me for tea. I was agreeably surprised since I thought I was too small a fry for this signal privilege. Feeling exhilarated at the idea of a cup or two with such a great man I left my room for the drawing room where tea had already been served. Lowering the newspaper which he was scanning, he looked at me with half-raised and half-drooping eyes through the semi-circular glasses that he wore and beckoned me to sit on a chair that was nearby. Maniben then served tea and biscuits and some Indian salt preparations. Sipping our tea, we began to converse on political and other matters of the moment. I was hesitant and somewhat reserved but he encouraged me to speak out. With the political background of the family and the opinions I had formed of political affairs through newspapers and other sources, it did not take me long to answer his questions or to put counter-points myself. Sometimes if I said anything about his Congress colleagues in the organisation, he would correct me if the impression I had formed from a distance was wrong. He then discussed some of the departmental problems –the All India Radio, the publicity organisation, the difficulties of law and order, the need for re-organising the services and the general outlook of the administrative machinery which had to be re-fashioned or re-orientated. On each of these, I was mainly an interested listener but what amazed me was his keen insight and the grasp he had already acquired of departmental matters within such a short time.

The tea hour ended and I asked him, as I was leaving, whether he would have some time for me so that I could dispose of some of the day's work before I left. He said that that was for me to say as it was my task to chalk out his day's programme. I told him that I had not looked into his programme yet. He turned to me half-jokingly. 'So you have neglected an important item the very first day.' I said, 'I am sorry but I did not know

that I had to do it.' He said, 'From tomorrow you and Maniben have to settle my day's programme and don't forget to keep time for yourself, along with that for meetings, interviews or other public engagements.' Thereafter he went out to fulfil his engagements and I was left with the day's work to study for him. I did that in the next one and a half hours and after he returned, before his dinner time at 7.30 p.m. he went through it with me. I then returned to my room. After dictating notes or writing them out I was preparing to go at about 8.00 p.m. when he met me after his dinner as he returned from the dining room and said in Hindi, 'Are you leaving?' I was surprised to hear him speak in Hindi as I was accustomed to talking to my superior officers in English. I replied, 'Yes sir. I have finished my day's work.' He then turned to me and chided me for speaking in a foreign language when I could do without it. I apologised to him and took a hint which I never forgot. Thenceforward Sardar and I generally conversed in Hindustani. It was neither the U.P. Urdu nor the U.P. Hindi, both of which due to the fanaticism of those days were to high-flown to serve our purpose, but it was a language which could be easily understood by the common man who is a much neglected person in this controversy. Even though it had the inevitable Gujarati flourishes which might have detracted from the purity of the language it was so characteristic of him and endeared him to the millions who heard him.

After a few brief questions and answers on either side and after offering my *namaskars* to him and Maniben, I left. Maniben with her characteristic courtesy to those who came to see Sardar, came to see me off. As I was leaving, she asked in Hindi when I would come the next day. I said that I had left enough work for Sardar to be busy till 9.00 a.m. and since nothing of the day's work had been left unfinished, I did not need to come before 10 O'clock. She said that I was speaking only of official work but callers and telephone calls had to be dealt with, and that the way I had dealt with the various matters made her feel that Bapu would ask for me earlier. I then asked her to ring me up if he did and left. As Maniben had warned me, Sardar asked for me the next day at about 8.30 a.m. but rather than left her ring for me he did it himself. How every one at home was thrilled, particularly my younger daughter Leela who received the call and who later was to become such a favourite of Sardar. I talked to him for a brief two minutes and the next minute I was speeding away in my car to 1, Aurangzeb Road.

But I am digressing from my account of the first day with Sardar. It was a long twelve-hour day interrupted by one hour for lunch and as I sat down after dinner to reflect on the day that had gone, I could not help feeling grateful to God for the wonderful opportunity He had given me to serve a great man and through him my country. With all my reverence for and awe of him, I never thought him to be so disarmingly kind and considerate nor so trusting and accommodating as I found him on the very first day. His house was kept meticulously clean and artistically simple. Before I joined I had read of the expenditure that had been incur-

red on its furnishing but when I saw it, so attractive even in its simplicity with all the furnishing material of the indigenous variety which was bound to be expensive I did not grudge either the expense or the taste with which it was all laid out. I was particularly struck by the way he received me in the morning. His talk with me about my work revealed not only his concern for accomplishing the day's work in an efficient and expeditious manner but also a systematic and businesslike approach which was so characteristic of him. The manner in which I could, after careful study, get a week's accumulation of important work disposed of in a couple of hours, and the skilful way in which he disposed of the knotty and complicated problems in short and crisp orders filled me with admiration for the directness of his approach, his comprehensive grasp of the problem, the manner in which he made difficult problems look simple, the brevity of expression of which he was such a master, and the strong commonsense and intensely practical view with which he tackled all matters.

More than this, in that one hour of tea, he had displayed an aspect of his mind which was a revelation to me. He showed the inner human core of his mind round which the stern exterior was built. He had taken me into full confidence about his colleagues in a manner that I did not expect of him on the very first day of our relationship. And what he told me was of so much value to me in my dealings with them. For I learnt from later experience that few were so sensitive to their shortcomings or so resentful of an intermediary like myself, as they. The problems surveyed in that one hour was of so broad and general a scope that I could easily size up Sardar's mind as that of a genius in human affairs. He did not indulge in the airy nothings into which many of us so easily relapse. He had the approach of a far hyphen seeing statesman, who had his fingers on the pulse of a great country whose future lay in his hands, and who had the vision to realise its greatness. He was imaginative and tolerant in his approach. The one telling effect of the first day's experience was the elimination of a number of cobwebs in my mind which I had about Sardar and an admiration for hitherto unrevealed human virtues which he exhibited; it was also the feeling of intense satisfaction that I had found in him a master who would effortlessly command devotion and loyalty. He would get these without his asking for them. But more than this was the exhilarating sensation of at last having found work which seemed so much to satisfy not only the instinct of service which had grown in me during my official career but also the zest for doing public good which I had imbibed in my early childhood and youth. I remember that, as I retired to bed, I felt like a child who had passed a glorious red letter day—the pleasure was so original, so absorbing and so complete! I looked forward to the next day as a child does to his birthday.

I hope that in this brief introduction the readers have imbibed the spirit of the first few days that I spent with Sardar which set for me a pattern for the next four years and three months to come. It is time that I took the readers' mind to the following days and events which were so

full of work and activity for me. Often have I thought what, in my judgement and according to my taste, should constitute the principle features of human existence. It was, however, once on the spur of the moment that I summed this up as 'love, life and laughter'. Sardar, during the next four years and two months gave me all these and more Sardar's love was as deep as his personality; for those who deserved it there was no dearth of it. His laughter was infectious and came from the depths of his very being. The account of those years which I venture to unfold to my readers is but a poor attempt to portray his personality in terms of the history of which he was either the maker or a co-sharer. Its impact on me was, however so great and its vividness so fresh that even today whenever I can turn my mind back to those days, the impressions come to me like those on a photographic plate, in all their colour, brightness and detail, as if they were matters of today.

Two

Sardar in Office

ON THE morning of 2 September 1946, in accordance with the invitation extended to the Congress by the Governer-General to form an Interim Government, the newly appointed members of his Executive Council, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Shri Jagjivan Ram, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Syed Ali Zaheer and Shri Asaf Ali were sworn in. The Council included Raja Gopalachari, John Mathai, C.H. Bhabha, Baldev Singh and Shafaat Ahmad Khan, who were sworn in later because they were ill or otherwise unable to take charge on that day. In a sense this development was a triumph for Sardar. It was he who at a crucial stage in the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission had evolved the device of accepting the long term plan but rejecting the arrangements for the Interim Government and had upset Jinnah's apple cart. This development culminated in the parting of the ways between the Congress Working Committee and the Mahatma. This was followed by Jinnah's ill-advised step in rejecting the Cabinet plan altogether. Consequently the Muslim League was not invited to form the Interim Government and Jinnah's plea that the Congress had really not accepted the plan did not find favour with the British Government. The culminative result of all this, so far as Congress leadership was 'concerned was that the leading strings of the organisation in regard to the transfer of power passed into the hands of Pandit Nehru and Sardar. Thus, the tactical decision taken by the Congress Working Committee on the Cabinet Mission Plant at the instance of Sardar became one of the most decisive influences in determining the course of constitutional history in the country. What is more, with the possibility of the Congress coming into office sooner rather than later Indian members of the Civil Services had begun to turn without fear towards the political leaders. It was during one of these moments when the Viceroy was responsive to the Indian official approach through Shri V.P. Menon, that the invitation to form the Interim Government reached the Congress leaders. Even here, as Shri V. P. Menon has told us, it was only after Sardar's reactions had been ascertained in advance that the final plunge was taken, and the Viceroy regretted that plunge only after it was too late.

The small religious ceremony at Birla House where Sardar was staying at the time and where some of the members of the new Government gathered to have the auspicious vermilion mark applied to their foreheads,

was thus the result of three months of tactical moves, hard work and sound and practical decisions. Much had happened during these three months which foreshadowed coming events. The postal strike of July 1946 which was settled due to Sardar's intervention was the first precursor of the new age that was dawning upon the country. It meant that the bureaucracy which had hitherto held aloof from the Congress was prepared, in anticipation of events, not only to seek the advice of the leader but also to abide by it. In the meantime, the elections to the Constituent Assembly had been held, and out of 296 seats the Congress had won 212, the Muslim League 73 and Independents 11. Jinnah, convinced of his new strength, frustrated in his long cherished idea of forming a League sponsored Interim Government at the Centre, and in a mood of utter desperation and bitterness, threw the gauntlet on 27 July, by formally withdrawing the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission plan and declaring 16 August as direct action day. If any evidence was needed of the sympathies of the British bureaucracy for the Muslim League, their inability or unwillingness to take suitable anticipatory action in the traditional style after this declaration, irrefutably provided it. At the same time, the brutalities and the virulence of direct action on 16th August, in important places, particularly in Calcutta, where there was no doubt that the large Muslim mass was either a participant or sympathetic spectator, showed the weakness of the Congress claim in regard to its hold over the Muslims. Muslim leaders flamboyantly threatened to repeat the massacres of Changez Khan and Nadir Shah. The police, having a majority of British and Muslim elements among the officers, and both elements among the officers, and both elements commanding a considerable proportion of the ranks, were unable to control the situation, and finally the army had to intervene. There was, however, one redeeming feature in this tragic holocaust as there is a silver lining in the darkest cloud. These tragedies deeply impressed the Viceroy and he felt that since the bureaucracy was unable to control the situation, he must turn to political organisations to to come to his aid. Since the Congress had accepted the long term plan though subject to a procedural difference of opinion and the Muslim League had rejected it, he had no other course but to call upon the Congress to form the Interim Government.

The birth of the Interim Government out of a constitutional impasse between the League and Government and preceded by the turmoils and tribulations of the events of August, was bound to be fraught with trouble and so far as the Governmental organisations were concerned, that trouble was both internal and external. Due to communal representations in the Services, the prejudice on the part of the British officialdom in favour of the Muslim staff, the partiality of the Muslim Members of the Council for their own community in giving appointments, combined with the fact that in certain key-posts a Muslim was preferred to a Hindu, the Muslim members of Governmental organisations commanded a voice and influence out of proportion to

their numbers. The very first day of the Congress Ministry drove this fact home to Sardar when he found that amid the jubilations, rejoicings and relief which the majority of the people felt at the advent of the Congress at the Centre, the general mass of Muslim Government servants could not conceal their sullenness, regret and apprehension. There is no doubt that many of them sought and received inspiration from the leaders of the Muslim League in the Capital since many were in the confidence of those leaders. This was particularly true of practically all the Punjabi and most of the U.P. Muslim officials who could not help indulging, even openly, in the presence of their non-Muslim colleagues, in an attitude of protest and defiance. This cleavage between the Muslim and the non-Muslim members of the Government organisations was, as we shall see later, portentous of incalculable harm to the country.

Jinnah had not taken kindly to the rapprochement which had been brought about by Sardar between the Congress and the Cabinet Mission. He had gone so far as to give a vivid picture of Sardar having been kidnapped by the Cabinet Mission and having finally prevailed upon them to accept his new approach. One can understand Jinnah's bitterness and sense of chagrin at these developments for he had throughout been not only anxious but also eager to see the Muslim League forming the Central Government as the senior partner with the Congress in the wilderness. It is true that in the earlier attempts which he made, during Lord Linlithgow's Viceroyalty to secure this objective, he had been thwarted by a solid refusal to accept Partition, and this stood between him and Lord Linlithgow. But when he found the realisation of the dream of Partition coming nearer, at the Simla Conference of June 1945, he did his best to manoeuvre developments with the help, no doubt, of the Muslim League sympathisers in the Viceroy's entourage to stall the Viceroy's attempt to form a coalition government. When he found that the Cabinet Mission Plan not only brought the realisation of that dream even nearer but in fact it also contained the germs of the Pakistan that he cherished, he made every effort to get entrenched in the Central Government with a view to shaping the constitutional future of the country according to his will and design. With avidity he accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, though it did not satisfy the condition that he had throughout insisted upon—namely the acceptance of Partition—and showed his eagerness to capture the seats of office and authority. He was doubtless hoping, until Sardar intervened, to bring about what would have definitely been a very significant and decisive event, namely an interim government with Muslim League members providing the driving force and having a decisive voice.

For those who sometimes indulge in the pleasant and interesting pastime of reflecting on the 'ifs' of history, it would be a stimulating exercise to deliberate on what would have happened if Jinnah with the support of the 'quislings' amongst the depressed classes and minority communities, had formed, instead of the Congress, the Interim Government at the Centre. The country would probably have seen a repression of the

Congress which would have thrown British methods into shade and a rapid evolution of a position in which Jinnah would have presented the *fait accompli* of a Pakistan not moth-eaten as he eventually got, but with the boundaries coming dangerously close to Delhi on one side and including Calcutta on the other. The Muslim majority Indian States and some of the Hindu States as well may have joined as satellites of the solar system of the League. That single strategic move of the Sardar thus dealt a death blow not only to Jinnah's dreams but also to these dangerous possibilities, and it was not, therefore, surprising that, Jinnah for the time being changed over to the methods of direct action in complete contradiction of the philosophy and that he had adopted so far. If the events of June and July angered him, the advent of the Interim Government almost maddened him. As sometimes happens, this state of semi-loss of reason was followed by a gleam of wisdom and we find Jinnah, soon after the Interim Government took office, trying to stage the entry of the Muslim League into the Interim Government. The Nawab of Bhopal, whose sympathy for Jinnah and the Muslim League can be gauged from the eagerness and anxiety with which he later entertained the idea of becoming Pakistan's Governor-General, obliged Jinnah with an offer of mediation. It is surprising that a shrewd judge of men like Gandhiji fell an easy victim to this cleverly conceived manoeuvre but Sardar was not to be deceived and even when the *Nawab* was carrying a formula of settlement from Gandhiji to Jinnah he warned Gandhiji against the *Nawab*'s stratagem and implored him to see the formula in writing before it went. But Gandhiji trusted the *Nawab* and found out the stratagem only too late. By that time the mischief had been done and though the Congress determinedly backed out of this formula, Jinnah got the opportunity of another fling at the credibility not only of the Congress but of Gandhiji himself.

In the meantime, Jinnah had entered the dovecotes of the Viceroy's house through the well-established Muslim League cell in his Secretariat. The Viceroy, as V.P. Menon has told us, began to have qualms particularly after his Calcutta visit at having kept the Muslim League out of Government, and began to lend a sympathetic ear to counsel for efforts to bring them in. He engaged himself directly in negotiations with Jinnah and Nehru. The position was such that the Congress could not have rejected a coalition outright. In the first place, all the leading lights of the Congress saw in this the only possibility of saving the country from a constitutional chaos or Partition. In the second place, if the Muslim League accepted the Constituent Assembly Plan, to which the Congress had become committed, there was no reason for the Congress to refuse to work with the League under the system that was originally accepted during negotiations with the Cabinet Mission. Thirdly, the dastardly attack on Sir Shafaat Ahmed Khan, one of the Muslim members of the Interim Government, had eventually brought home to the Congress the dangers to its Muslim colleagues from League fanaticism. The Congress members of the Executive Council had not yet tasted the bitter

fruit of the anti-national outlook and sympathy of the Muslim League members and the Muslim staff. In fact, they had taken at its face value, the protestations of loyalty and support from people who, at the very next moment, proceeded to the counsels of the League leaders elsewhere. There was, therefore, little justification for them to anticipate what was to follow from these elements in the Services, when the League members actually joined the Government. Even then the Congress insisted that before Jinnah could be allowed to nominate four out of eleven members of the Executive Council, he should commit himself in writing to the condition precedent to the League joining the Government. Sardar was particularly strong on this point and went to the extent of writing to the Viceroy on 20 October, warning against the Interim Government becoming the arena of party politics and of intrigues and 'driving in the very partition a wedge'. He made it also clear that before the coalition could come into existence and portfolios could be redistributed, there should be a clear announcement by the Council of the League, accepting the longterm plan of the Cabinet Mission and that the text and the resolution of the Council to this effect should be supplied to the present Members of the Cabinet.

Unfortunately, at that time contrary to Sardar's advice, Pandit Nehru had undertaken a brief visit to the Frontier which had resulted not only in unpleasant experiences but also had unfortunate consequences. On his return to Delhi he had to grapple with the swift developments that had taken place in his absence. It is not, therefore, surprising that what followed was not quite in accord with what Sardar had insisted in his letters to the Viceroy, and the Congress was content with the Viceroy's verbal statement to Jawahar Lal Nehru that the Muslim League's entry into Interim Government was conditional on Jinnah's acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan and that Jinnah would call a meeting of the Council of the Muslim Leagues at an early date, to confirm this. The Viceroy also referred to an assurance conveyed to him by Jinnah that the Muslim League was entering the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly with the intention to cooperate. It is amazing that Pandit Nehru, at the time should not have insisted on a resolution of the League Council prior to the entry of the Muslim League Members into the Government. If he had done so he would have forestalled the obvious move of the League Members, not only to capture a part of the power that vested in the Interim Government but also to work as a parallel body both within the Executive Council and without. Whatever may be the explanation for this undoubtedly serious lapse, the die was finally cast and the path was made clear for the Muslim League to come into office.

A last minute hitch, however, arose over the redistribution of portfolios. The League, for reasons which were obvious to every one except Maulana Azad and his apologists, insisted on having the Home portfolio. Sardar, who had not only realised by this time the importance of the Home portfolio but had also fully understood the reasons for the League

insisting upon it, stoutly refused to give up his portfolio and threatened to resign. Finally an arrangement was arrived at whereby the Muslim League was to get Finance and Sardar could retain the Departments of Home and Information & Broadcasting. The Maulana has castigated Sardar for his intransigence and blamed his refusal as one of the factors which eventually brought about partition. Even Macaulay's school boy could have seen through the League game in demanding the Home portfolio. It held the key to law and order in the country in the prevailing period of transition and uncertainty and with the League's policy of direct action still kept alive, the transfer of this portfolio to the League would have been virtually tantamount to handing over of the police in a dacoit-infested area to the lawless elements. Without this portfolio, the League could subsequently create conditions which made orderly Government impossible. With this portfolio, they could have created anarchy and chaos throughout the country. With the Congress and the majority of Hindus devoted philosophically, temperamentally and traditionally to non-violence, it is clear that in a moment of sheer demoralisation the League could have dictated its own terms to a mass of humanity which would have been hankering for peace at any price, In fact, Sardar's insistence on the retention of the Home portfolio, was one of the most important political decisions he took at the time. It was because of that decision that the country could secure a transition from unity to Partition by limiting the blood bath that followed only to those areas in which the Muslims were undoubtedly strongly entrenched and in which his own control could be exercised only through a bureaucracy which was predominantly British or Muslim.

Whilst these developments were taking place the new dispensation settled down quickly to its onerous responsibilities. The task before it was difficult. There was no doubt that the change had been forced on the British officialdom by the new Labour Government. Naturally, therefore, below the official rectitude for which the British Members of the Civil Service were justly renowned, there was a layer of scepticism and conservatism, an old die-hard mentality and an incapacity to adapt itself to the circumstances. But, by and large the British members of the Civil Service played the game by paying due obedience to the orders and instructions of the new Members and generally offering them help and cooperation in administering their charges. I could particularly speak for the Home Secretary, Porter, whose confidence, as indeed that of his predecessor, I enjoyed without reservation, and who carried out his official task under an Indian Home Member, with ability and skill.

In the meantime, between Sardar and myself had begun an association characterised by complete mutual confidence and affection, and for me a mission of devotion and dedication which I had not experienced before and was not to experience again. Little did I then imagine that from a mere official of little consequence in the hierarchy, I would step into the

family circle and become in course of time, almost an indispensable part of Sardar's life and work. In fact, I had hardly any conception of being much more than what I had seen Rai Sahib Bhagwant Rai to be as the Private Secretary of a succession of Home Members of the past. But destiny had in store for me a future in which I was to play my assigned role under conditions requiring hard work. Ahead of me lay difficult and momentous problems in a mixed atmosphere of appreciation and petty jealousies, peace and turmoil.

It was only when I came into closer association with Sardar that I realised his strength and influence over his colleagues, including the Prime Minister; his lightning decisions, his definite views, his intensely practical outlook, his uncanny gift of sizing up men and situations, and the hold that he exercised over the party machine. I could also get glimses of his keen sense of strategy, his power of anticipation and the difficulty of his opponents in catching him on the wrong foot. One of the first things that he told me was never to commit oneself in writing until one was sure of oneself and, if one was not, always to leave a loophole for retreat without loss of prestige, should it become necessary to retrace one's steps. It was an instruction of which he gave me many instances of practical application when he corrected my drafts. We were also fortunate that Pandit Nehru was living very close by at 17, York Road, so that both of them could see much more of each other and could confer with each other personally rather than communicate through correspondence on every important issue. Not afflicted by any particular ailment, except his perpetual intestinal trouble, and possessed of a strong constitution and unboundry energy Sardar led a regular and systematic life, rising and retiring to bed early, and fully realising the worth of economy of words and value of time. He was good enough to dispense with my services during his early morning walks which started well before sunrise. It was then that he dealt skilfully with different kinds of people each with his own problem. This was an opportunity when one could find him completely free from the preoccupations of office and politics ; Sardar was a very brisk walker event at that age of seventy two. It used to be difficult for much younger men to keep pace with him. Sometimes, out of curiosity, I used to join him in those walks. At such times, I could get an insight into the working of Sardar's mind which I would never have got during periods of official business. Later, when these walks had to be replaced by car drives, and when he used to leave at a later hour, say about 6 a.m. I would always accompany him and it was no less an instructive experience than before.

After his walks Sardar would have his bath and breakfast, followed by a study of the newspapers which he never missed and over which he spent at least one hour. The newspapers formed a part of the daily routine because it was only through them that he could keep track of political, social, economic and other developments throughout the world. My own view is that it is this close study of the newspapers both in the mornings and afternoons that constituted the foundation of the extensive knowledge

of facts and figures and events on Indian and world affairs with which so many found him fully conversant. After the study of the newspapers, unless there was an important visitor, he used either to sit in the office room or call me to his drawing room for the disposal of files or other papers, if any, that had remained overnight. In addition, he would dispose of, during this time, many reports, Cabinet papers and other documents which had remained unfinished since his early morning study. By this time, the hour of his departure for the office or for meetings etc. would approach. He would them leave, but seldom, if ever, in a hurry and almost always in an attitude of serenity and contentment, except when his mind was troubled or agitated as for instance during the period of turmoil between August 1947 and February 1948. As long as his health permitted, Sardar regularly attended his office before lunch and preferred to see his official visitors there.

The afternoons he generally reserved for the disposal of files received during the day, or for seeing Nehru, Gandhiji and other important personalities or going out to see friends. He almost always had his tea at home and would send for me to join as soon as-the tea tray appeared. Generally we were the only ones besides Maniben, and I utilised that period to inform Sardar of the day's developments and to discuss important problems, departmental or otherwise and for a genaral exchange of views on the events of the day or topics of general interest. After tea he either took a walk on the lawns or went to see Gandhiji or the Prime Minister and returned about 6.30 p.m. when he had select visitors like G.V. Mavlankar and Ghanshyamdas Birla or other friends to see him. At about 7.30 p.m. he would have his dinner. Even at this time a number of visitors, who were rather close to him would sit round the dinner table and discuss matters, with him. Shortly after dinner, he would make his long-distance and local calls to Chief Ministers or Ministers of the Provinces. He was so particular about being kept well-informed that even though I generally left him at abont 9 p.m. he would ring me up at the house in order to ensure that no item of news which might interest him had been left out.

This was the pattern of an average day in Sardar' life and in cold print it might appear as one of peace and tranquillity; in actual fact, the days were so anxious and the times so difficult that only a man of extraordinary self-control could have maintained a calm disposition. Sardar's difficulties in administering the Home portfolio were undoubtedly many and severe, and his task in discharging the duties of the Member for Information & Broadcasting was not easy either. He had to deal with the Press which was as sharply divided in its loyalties and views as politicians themselves. The press correspondents—British, American and other foreigners as well as Indians—called for an inexhaustible fund of patience, tact, resourcefulness, imagination and adroitness. Sardar, as a seasoned politician who combined all these qualities had a sense of humour and repartee which was equal to the task. The problems of the All India

Radio, particularly with Bozman as Secretary, and A.S. Bokhari as Director General, were particularly taxing. Bokhari's sympathies were unmistakable and the direction of the language policy of the A.I.R. was already a subject of controversy, almost as sharp and bitter as the political ones. The difficulties of Sardar in steering his own course in the Ministry were numerous. Both his portfolios, the value and importance of which were so clearly realised by the Muslim League leaders and in the management of which they continued to take a special interest, provided Sardar with a rare opportunity of displaying those virtues of shrewdness of judgment, soundness of views and knowledge of tactics which were later to find even more pronounced expression when he had to deal with the many burning problems after Independenence.

By the time I joined Sardar, he had already settled down to his duties with a clear perception of the line that he was going to take. He had made up his mind that the two key Services—the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police—would have to be fashioned into new structures and that the police in the states would have to be reorganised with a view to representing more faithfully the constituent elements of national life. In the Home Department, he addressed himself swiftly to these tasks and whilst, on one side, he issued confidential instructions to the Chief Ministers of the Congress Provinces to take up immediately the re-organisation of their police forces, with a view to forestalling coming troubles and also to making them more effective units for dealing with situations of lawlessness and disorder on the other, he convened a conference of the Chief Ministers of the Provinces to evolve a scheme of two new All India Services—the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Police Service—to replace the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police. These would suffer considerable depletion, as a consequence of independence and were to be liquidated on the transfer of power. In his very first utterance to the assembled Chief Ministers, Sardar gave in no uncertain terms, his views on the need of taking the Services with them and forging them into efficient and effective instruments for dealing with the numerous tasks that lay ahead. He gave a survey of the problems facing the country and the need of realising the import of the changes that were coming. He also stressed the need for so organising the administrative machinery as to ensure a smooth change over from the old to the new regime. The Chief Ministers, whom he addressed, were a mixed crowd. They included towering personalities like Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, with his own views about emoluments to be given to civil servants and the influence of politicians in local affairs ; Harekrushna Mehtab, with his understanding about the role of administrators in helping to shape policy and administration and Sri Krishna Sinha who followed a middle path between the two. The rest had hardly any well thought-out views of their own, though they were generally appreciative of the needs of the situation and the pointer Sardar gave towards a sober and steady judgement on the issues involved. It was after two days of long

discussions, in which Sardar had to deal with the various issues and with the Chief Ministers and others present, in a firm, tactful but forthright manner, that the structure of the Services was evolved and the consent of all the States to the formation of the two Services was obtained. This excluded the Punjab, which was, at that time, in a difficult position though led by a non-League Chief Minister, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan, and the provinces where the League Ministry was in office. One of the points he forcefully made was that these all-India Security Services would be a strong safeguard of the unity of the country and ensure uniformity of standards of administration over the entire sub-continent. They were to replace the two Secretary of State Services, the I.C.S. and the I.P., which had formed the steel-frame so far.

That Sardar should have achieved this difficult task in less than two months of his assumption of office was a tribute not only to his quick preception of what was required but also to the driving force which he provided not only to his own Department but also to the Provincial Governments.

In dealing with the Press and with foreign correspondents, Sardar's main task was to circumvent the machinations of the League Press, like the Dawn which, aided by their sources of information inside the Government, hardly ever refrained from exaggeration, unfounded insinuations, prejudiced comments and vitriolic attacks on Congress policies and personalities. He had also to deal with foreign correspondents who were divided in their sympathies between the Congress and the Muslim League and many of whom could speak faithfully for the die-hard elements in the British Administration in India. Both these situations he countered, not only by well-timed statements, contradictions and explanations, press summaries and other literature but also by briefing and mobilising the overwhelming section of the Indian Press which was out to support the cause of nationalism with vigour, strength, determination and resourcefulness. He particularly utilised the platform of the First Newspapers Editors' Conference which he inagurated to explain his policies as Member in-Charge of Information & Broadcasting and which met in Delhi under the presidentship of Shri Devdas Gandhi. The Statesman under thr editorship of Ian Stephens, particularly gave him cause for anxiety on a number of occasions, but he so handled its Editor that by and large he succeeded in either securing a modification of the opposing views or even getting an appreciation of what the Congress and he were doing.

The problem of the All India Radio, which had virtually been transformed into Bokhari's empire, had begun to show a change under the constant pressure exercised by Sardar, but it was not solved to Sardar's satisfaction until, by a master-stroke of tact and firmness, he relieved Bokhari and got an officer of his own choice in the late P.C. Choudhary. This came about in the following way. In order to better his own prospects, Bokhari approached Bozman with the proposition that he should be allowed to join the Government College at Lahore as its Principal for which he

had received an offer. Bozman suggested that it should be made worth his while for Bokhari to stay as Director General, All India Radio. But Sardar had found the opportunity he had been waiting for. He promptly replied that he would not like to stand in the way of Bokhari's prospects and would, therefore, look for a substitute. He asked Bozman to inform Bokhari that he could arrange to take over as Principal of the Government College at Lahore as soon as he wished. With Bokhari's departure, the greatest stumbling block in the reformation of the All India Radio to the new way of thinking was removed.

One of the most controversial issues in the administration of the Information & Broadcasting portfolio was the question of the language of the All India Radio. At the time Sardar assumed office, Bokhari's ideas on the subject were holding the field. His scheme was based on a system of rationing of time between English, Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani. The protagonists of Hindi contended that in this scheme Hindi had a raw deal. Hindustani was the language advocated by Gandhiji. It differed from Urdu and Hindi in its comparative simplicity and intelligibility. But the difficulties of finding speakers who could speak that type of Hindustani on the Radio and avoid running into literary Hindi or literary Urdu were obvious. In order to evolve his own brand of language, Bokhari had prepared an A.I.R. lexicon in which English words in common use were given synonyms but the protagonists of Hindi felt that synonyms were heavy weighted against Hindi. The staffing pattern of the All India Radio also strengthened the case of the Hindi protagonists for its reform in the direction of their own way of thinking. Sardar, who had the advantage of being able to look at the problem from the point of view of the common listener, uncommitted to literary predilections, studied it at great length and held long discussions with those who were competent to advise him on this subject, including Rajendra Prasad and the League Members. The League Members made a political issue out of it; whether it was Liaquat Ali Khan from U.P., or Ghazanfar Ali Khan from the Punjab, or Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar from the Frontier, they were all ranged against any interference with the *status quo*. Lord Wavell, whom Sardar took fully into confidence over this matter, and who displayed a personal interest in this controversy because he knew it had potentialities of a crisis, threw his weight into the solution that Sardar had evolved. Even then it was not until Sardar and the League Members of the Governor-General's Council had a very long but cordial discussion over this issue at his house that ultimately Sardar had his way.

This instance, more than any other, brings out vividly the cordial personal relations that existed between Sardar and his Muslim League colleagues despite serious cleavages on political and administrative issues. In fact, the whole attitude of the League Members was one of personal animosity to Pandit Nehru, whose status and authority as Vice-President of the Council, which was taken by others as analogous to that of the Prime Minister, was hotly disputed by them. Nehru's understanding of the Muslim

point of view, notwithstanding his difference of opinion with them, proved of no avail in establishing normal methods of social and personal relationship between the two. There was no doubt that ever since the entry of the League into the Executive Council, Liaquat Ali Khan set himself up as a Muslim rival to Pandit Nehru and the League Members indulged in much more affronts to him than they did to Sardar, whom they nevertheless dubbed as a communalist and an uncompromising Congressman. For instance, the Members of the League refused to attend any parties given by Pandit Nehru and always declared publicly and in private that the appellation of the Vice-President of the Council, generally attached to Pandit Nehru's name, meant nothing at all. At the same time, the Members of the League attended a party given by Sardar to Lady Cripps They did not hesitate to meet Sardar even otherwise and a cordial atmosphere prevailed whenever they met.

It was at the party which he had given to Lady Cripps that Sardar mentioned their unfortunate attitude towards Pandit Nehru. I recall the answer which was given on their behalf almost simultaneously. It was that whilst they understood what Sardar stood for *vis-a-vis* the Muslim and whilst they could understand his point of view, though they could not agree with it, they did not know what Pandit Nehru stood for in relation to them. They generally felt that more harm had been done to the cause of the Muslims by Pandit Nehru's contradictory behaviour and inconsistent policies, than by Sardar's open and clear opposition to Muslim League interests. Sardar pleaded with them that Pandit Nehru's heart was of pure gold, that he had both understanding and sympathy for the Legitimate interests of the Muslim community, that he had no prejudice or bias regarding Muslims or Hindus and that he could be a sound bridge between the Hindu and Muslim points of view. He also appealed to them to extend justice and fairplay to what Pandit Nehru stood for as a nationalist leader and to change their attitude towards him but the League leaders were unrelenting, and adamant. It was during this discussion that Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar referred to Pandit Nehru's visit to the Frontier as a deliberate encroachment on the League preserve and rather seemed to enjoy the description of some of the incidents that took place then. Once or twice, I saw Sardar and Liaquat Ali Khan together and I could see that there was no ice between the two, I recalled these scenes when I read after Sardar's death the very generous tribute to his memory that Liaquat Ali Khan paid and particularly his description of him in the following terms, 'he always meant what he said and said what he meant.' It seems that it was this triat of Sardar's more than anything else that did not allow much of a cloud or gloom to come between him and his Muslim League colleagues.

With the League in charge of the portfolios of Finance, Communications, Commerce, Health and Law the Congress Members of the coalition Government laboured under severe handicaps; in maintaining the secrecy of their communications, both local and outside, of getting their projects or proposals involving financial sections through the Finance Department

and of securing satisfactory inter-Departmental consultations between their own Departments and those in charge of their Muslim League colleagues. In fact delays, obstructions and opposition between the two wings became the order of the day and gradually the affairs of Government drifted into the creation of two watertight compartments—one representing the sphere in which the Congress members functioned as freely as the intransigence of the Finance Department would allow and another in which the League leaders could function either with or without the concurrence of their colleagues in the other sphere On any controversial issue, and sometimes even on seemingly innocent ones, the atmosphere would degenerate into sharp conflicts resulting in a show-down between the League and the Congress Members The discussions were often acrimonious and decisions were either postponed or reached by a majority vote. What is more, the League Members and the British and Muslim staff, whose services they commanded in their Departments, converted the latter into practically self-contained empires in which normal collective methods of conduct and business were at a discount and the guiding factor was whether it furthered the interests of a future Pakistan and whether it did damage to Hindu, or promoted Muslim, interests. The obvious, unabashed Muslim bias which was displayed in administrative policies and measures and in the excercise of patronage, virtually converted their Departments into entrenched Muslim camps. In contrast with this, there was hardly any change in the strength and character of the Departments in charge of the Congress Members. Even in the Intelligence Bureau, which was under Sardar and key organisation from the political and administrative point of view and in which Ghulam Ahmed was the main figure as Deputy Director, no change, except those that took place in the ordinary course, was effected. In the A.I.R., except for the exit of A.S. Bokhari, which he invited upon himself, hardly any change or disturbance of any consequence was caused. There was no doubt that, notwithstanding their antipathy to the Muslim League, the Congress nominees in the Viceroy's Executive Council tried to maintain the tradition of collective functioning, and did not indulge in opposition for the sake of opposition, though inevitable cleavages of opinion could not but result in decisions which were not to the liking of the League Members. Nor did the Congress Members of the Council follow any attitude of deliberate manoeuvring. It was these symptoms that were in evidence even at the very start of the Coalition Government that finally led to the creation of virtually two armed camps in the same Government. This was an important factor in determining the attitude of Pandit Nehru and Sardar towards the question of Partition.

Three

The troubles of the Coalition Government and the Meerut Congress

SOON AFTER the Coalition Government came into being, communal troubles started in Noakhali, followed by repercussions in Bihar, with the usual feature of an underestimate of damage to life and property by one side countered by an overestimate of the same by the other. Stories—fanciful, interested and prejudiced—about the happenings at both these places and of the tragedies that formed a prominent feature of the Calcutta killing on 16 August, circulated all over India and disturbed the even tenor of Hindu-Muslim relations in places which had not known communal outbreaks in recent history. The Coalition Government was considerably disturbed by these happenings and Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Sardar Baldev Singh on one side and Liaquat Ali Khan and some of his colleagues on the other, visited both Calcutta and Bihar in an attempt to stem the tide of communal violence. The situation in Bihar was brought under control due to the timely and strong action taken by the Bihar Government and the personal visits of Pandit Nehru and the Chief Minister Shri Krishna Sinha as well as the close interest taken in the happenings by Gandhiji. The Frontier Gandhi was also called in to intensify efforts to attain normalcy. However, the fire in Noakhali continued to rage until Gandhiji decided to take it in hand and made his abode there, with a view to repairing the damage done. He and his zealous band of followers made it their sole occupation to restore peace and harmony in these ravaged areas and Gandhiji's barefooted journeys from village to village constituted an epic of missionary zeal and dedication which was without parallel in the history of the country. Sardar kept himself in constant touch with Gandhiji through correspondence and through emissaries among whom a stalwart Sikh, Jiwan Singh was one. It is there that we witnessed how difficult the task, even for a national leader like Gandhiji to succeed in his mission under a Government owing its allegiance to the Muslim League and an officialdom which was devoted to its methods and ideologies. Those who have read Peareylal's faithful description of this lone mission of Gandhiji cannot but pay a warm and silent tribute to the supreme example of his dedication at that age for the cause that he held so dear. But the cost to the country was dear indeed. In the first place, it took Gandhiji away from the active scene of Indian politics

into a remote corner from where he lost touch with his followers and colleagues. Secondly, the shadow of Noakhali lengthened throughout the country and in the background of what had preceded those occurrences, it presaged for the country a period of organised and sustained internecine conflict at different places. Sardar was not unmindful of these consequences and, whilst he continued to miss his contacts with Gandhiji, he began to intensify his efforts to secure a proper functioning of the police machinery throughout the country, including the tightening of the law against efforts to create disorder crime or arson. In this, of course, he had to depart radically from Gandhiji's concept of non-violence and correspondence between them at the time showed sharp differences. But such was Gandhiji's mood after the differences on the Cabinet Mission Plan and the Governmental approach to administrative problems that he contented himself with advice and did not force his views.

As soon as the new Congress Government got a little respite, organisational matters began to engage its attention, The transition from a fighting organisation waging a freedom struggle involving periodic visits of individuals to jail to a body on which the main brunt of taking over from the departing British authority was to fall, could not but make a deep impact on Congressmen and the Congress organisation generally. To some extent, Congressmen and the Congress orgainsation felt the same qualitative change as the Central Government itself. From irresponsibility, the character of both changed to responsibility. The irresponsibility sprang out of non-participation in administration. The call for taking on new responsibilities was due to a change in the character of Government itself. In the case of Congressmen in general, it was a transformation from 'have not' to 'have' — a very drastic change indeed, which called for unprecedented capacity to keep their heads cool and together. The circumstances in which this change took place were no less significant. The change had come about in the midst of a sea of problems and demanded that the ship of the organisation must steer its course between the Scylla of British sullenness and reluctance on one side and the Charybdis of League hostility on the other. As if these did not constitute sufficient dangers, the prospects of the departure of the British caused the waters, both on this side and beyond, to present an unusually troubled appearance. To carry the metaphor further, in order to give a realistic description of what faced the Congress organisation at the time, it could well be said that the seas were choppy, the sky overcast, the winds threatened further storms and the ship had to pass through all this before it could hope to enter calm and steady waters.

At the same time, the Congress internally was not a united body. In the fact of approaching Independence, the High Command gradually appeared to imbibe a unity of purpose and a reasonable degree of unity of thought and policies. But within the organisation it had to deal with two particularly difficult groups—one consisting of the Socialists under

the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali and the other which though not belonging to the Socialist Party had taken part in the under ground movement. There was a third, though small group, which still cherished memories of Subhas Chandra Bose's leadership of the Indian National Army and the Azad Hind Government and had pronounced sympathies for the INA men whose problem had become a matter of prestige and honour between the Congress Members of the Interim Government on one side, and the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief on the other. So far as the Socialists were concerned, they could find nothing right with the leadership of the High Command, whether it was in the field of domestic policies or in the tactics of the High Command in dealing with the constitutional problem. They gloried in the part that they had undertaken, even though against Gandhiji's direction, in the underground movement of 1942. They appropriated a halo of martyrdom round their heads, either for having gone to the prison for long terms, or for having lost some comrades, or for having had to remain underground under the very difficult conditions of wartime jail regulations. In short, they ascribed to themselves the role of heroes of the freedom struggle of 1942-45. The second group owed allegiance to the High Command but claimed a special recognition for their services. They were somewhat apologetic for having gone against Gandhiji's directions and principles; in defence they pleaded lack of instructions and having been left in a position of utter confusion in the absence of those instructions. The third group, though not influential, was one which evoked a great deal of sympathy. Sardar was the first to take steps to extend his sympathies to the INA officers and men in a concrete form. Though he was undergoing medical treatment, on receipt of a letter from Sarat Babu about Court Martial proceedings, he persuaded Gandhiji to write to the Viceroy and enlisted Bhulabhai Desai and others for their defence. He also became Chairman of the INA Committee of the Congress which raised funds to assist the INA people and which was generally dealing with the problems of their rehabilitation. Pandit Nehru also took an active part in arranging for the defence of the INA officers on trial in the Red Fort and was entirely in favour of the Congress securing a just treatment for the INA rank and file. Even though this group raised no problems within the Congress, it was undoubtedly interested in keeping the INA problems before the organisation and the country, and from that point of view it was a factor to be reckoned with in the relationship between the British authority in India and the Congress. Hence, it caused some diversion from the main preoccupations of both the Congress members in the Interim Government and the organisation itself.

The elections to the Provincial Legislatures, which had been held in 1945-46, had clearly demonstrated that no other organisation had any chance against the Congress, so far as non-Muslim constituencies were concerned. But in the Muslim constituencies there was no doubt that the League had both decisive and weighty influence to such an extent as to

make the Congress position in the Muslim constituencies almost analogous to the position of other parties in the non-Muslim constituencies. In the Interim Government, as well as in the country as a whole the main political activity rested between the Congress and the League ; and in the circumstances and the prevailing atmosphere, such activity could not but assume a communal colour as between Hindus and Muslims, though the Congress claimed justly to speak for the import elements in India's national life.

In such a situation, it was of the utmost importance that the leadership of the Congress organisation should be in very competent hands. At the same time, it was necessary that there should be no conflict between the Government wing of the Congress and the organisational authority. The choice of a President to succeed Pandit Nehru was thus a very difficult one. There was none outside the government, who could claim that long period of leadership in the Congress as did Acharya Kripalani and Maulana Azad. Maulana Azad had been President of the Congress for a record period until he was succeeded by Pandit Nehru in July 1946. At that time also, the organisation faced difficulties in that the choice of the majority of the PCCs was for Sardar, whereas Gandhiji's choice fell on Pandit Nehru and after that there was, of course, no question of a contest. After the Interim Government was formed, Pandit Nehru could not obviously hold on to that office for long, and with the approach of the Congress Session at Meerut, which was to be held in November, the choice of a successor to Pandit Nehru became an urgent one. The Congress High Command selected Acharya Kripalani. The Acharya belonged to what was known as the orthodox group in the Congress Working Committee to which Rajendra Prasad, Sardar Shankarrao Deo and some others belonged. He had been General Secretary of the Congress for a number of years and had given sufficient evidence of his devotion to the ideals of Gandhiji and competence to administer the affairs of the organisation. Maulana Azad, at that time, was somewhat out of favour with the High Command, mainly due to certain difficulties that had been created during the negotiations with the Cabinet Mission because of certain unauthorised talks that he was reported to have held with them, and a letter which he had issued without the knowledge of his colleagues. At the same time, Maulana Azad realised the weight and influence of the office of the President of the Congress and felt somewhat frustrated that he had not been selected as a member of the Congress team in the Interim Government. Sardar received very reliable reports of behind the scene activities of the Maulana to secure nomination for the Presidentship of the Congress, and actually his name was proposed. Everybody expected that he would withdraw from the contest at once but there was delay. Sardar again received reports from reliable co-workers that the interim period was utilised in canvassing support of some of the PCCs who mattered. However, eventually, he withdrew and Acharya Kripalani's election as Congress was secured without a contest. This was the first major organisational conflict which I had the

opportunity of witnessing at close quarters and I could see what powerful strings Sardar could pull from his house in Delhi, in distant corners of the country, to forestall and checkmate the Maulana's attempts. He was in daily touch with the developments and one of his frequent visitors early in the morning, used to be Shrimati Sucheta Kripalani, who kept him posted with whatever important information on this matter came to the office of the AICC, or to her and Acharya Kripalani.

The preparations for the Meerut Session of the Congress were in full swing and it was well known that there was going to be a shown-down between the High Command and the Socialists. The Socialist Group had an interesting history. It owed itself to the inspiration of Pandit Nehru, whose personal views on socialism became somewhat diluted when they emerged in the Congress resolutions and the election manifestos of the Congress. The Socialist Group in the Congress stood for socialism of a more advanced type and was as militant a group as an organisation devoted to peace and non-violence could allow it to be. Hitherto, none could have touched them, as from the ideological point of view, they enjoyed the sympathies of Pandit Nehru, but a change had now come in that the Socialist Group had markedly departed from Gandhiji's tenets of non-violence and had virtually followed their own line during the Quit India movement. Sardar was fully prepared for the show-down and he was not only in a fighting mood, but also prepared for a combat *a outrance*. He had organised his moves accordingly, and the battle royal was to come on the main resolution supporting the policies of the High Command and the resolution that had been passed by the Working Committee of the A.I.C.C. on negotiations with the Cabinet Mission and the formation of the Interim Government.

Before the Meerut Session of the Congress was held, however, Sardar utilised a brief respite to represent to the Viceroy the difficulties that the Punjab Unionist-cum-Congress Government was facing from the officials and the Governor, and also regarding the happenings in Bengal under the League Ministry. These were, however, a formality, for the Viceroy was quite unwilling to do anything and even if he were willing, he would have been quite ineffective because he would have met with resistance from his own Secretariat and from the Governors of the two provinces. The Meerut Session of the Congress followed, and as has been indicated earlier, the main business before it was to confirm what had been done already, since 1945, after the release of the Members of the Working Committee. Acharya Kripalani's presidential address was a competent and able performance. It provided sound reasoning for what had been done at different stages of the country's history during the last two years. It had also passages which could inspire and passages which, in his own inimitable style, were satirical and as such effective. But the main interest lay in the official resolution moved by Sardar approving the action that had been taken by the Working Committee in the interim period. Sardar made a comparatively brief but telling speech while moving the resolution. There

was, however, little that had not been said on this subject already, though Sardar always could be depended upon to give his own touch. The opposition was led by Jayaprakash Narayan and Aruna Asaf Ali. They found strong support in Maulana Hifuzur Rahman who made a fiery and impassioned speech in Urdu. The main theme of the opposition was that it was not the tactics and strategy of the High Command but the underground movement which by the heroism of its members who laid down their lives for the country (as against the comparatively easy life that the members of the High Command had led, even though they were in jail) had secured a change in the British attitude. Their main grievance was that the High Command had failed to secure the objective of Independence and had also preferred to negotiate for a constitutional settlement, whereas the country was ready and in a mood to secure independence through another struggle. There were, of course, the easy jibes against the conservatism of the High Command as against the radical thinking and programme of the Socialists. It fell to Sardar to reply to this highly sentimental attack pitched in a loud key.

Sardar started by likening persons like Aruna Asaf Ali and Jayaprakash Narayan to children and saying how the older people like him enjoyed listening to their criticism. He said that he was not at all upset or angered by what had been said by them. On the other hand, he thoroughly enjoyed it. He accused the Socialists of not only conducting themselves contrary to the creed of the Congress but also for causing considerable embarrassment to the organisation because of their renegade philosophies and actions. He traced the doings of the Socialist Party within the Congress and pointed out how, at all crucial moments, they constituted a drag on the organisation. He likened their claim to have secured a change in the British policy towards India because of their underground activities, to what a dog felt whilst walking under the shadow of a cart, namely that it was driving the cart and not the man and the pair of bullocks who were actually sweating and labouring to take it towards its destination. He also dealt with the events of 16 August, Noakhali and Bihar and referred to the prevailing tension in the country. He ascribed it entirely to the activities and policies of Jinnah and his Muslim League. He warned them against continuing activities of violence and lawlessness, and drew prolonged and universal applause by his statement that the sword would be answered by the sword. As he ended his speech, the response from the Congress delegates was not only enthusiastic but overwhelming and there was no mistaking the ultimate decision. The official resolution was carried by a huge majority and the Socialist Group, which had been thinking in terms of mustering sizeable numbers, could collect only a few votes. This was a most decisive defeat of the Socialists and it was clear that the only honourable course for them at the time was to quit the Congress, which they did soon after. I had never heard Sardar before and could not help being thrilled by his masterly performance at the Congress Session. He spoke in simple Hindustani bearing traces of

Gujarati but I doubt if any literary or oratorical feat could have been as effective as this one was. It was a mixture of persuasive, satirical and oratorical styles. The *coup de grace* to the Socialists was administered by Acharya Kripalani in his final summing up, which also I regarded as a brilliant performance made all the more effective by its extempore character.

It is interesting that, notwithstanding these open clashes, the relations beween Sardar and the Socialists, particularly Jayaprakash Narayan, continued to be quite friendly. That relationship survived even the shock that was administered to Sardar by certain of Jayaprakash Narayan's actions following Gandhiji's assassination. Both Sardar and Maniben had particular regard for Shrimati Prabha Devi wife of Jay Prakash, who was at one time an inmate of Gandhiji's ashram. She struck me as a picture of simplicity. I remember how, later, when both of them came to Sardar once, and Jayaprakash Narayan was clad in the P.S.P. uniform of the time, namely, a red cap and white Khaddar dress, Sardar jokingly remarked as to why he had mixed the colours and why he could not be red all over.

After the Meerut Congress Session, Sardar began to concentrate on the measures required to prepare for the transfer of power from British to Indian hands, on the coming deliberations of the Constituent Assembly which was scheduled to meet on 9 December, and on securing from Jinnah and the Muslim League a constructive acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan relating to the Constituent Assembly so that it could settle down to the job of framing a Constitution. All these brought him into conflict with his League colleagues who refused to carry out the assurance which had been held out by Lord Wavell on their behalf, to look at the coalition in a spirit of team work and cooperation or to rescind the earlier resolution of the League Council rejecting the Cabinet Mission Plan. Despite the fact that both Pandit Nehru and Sardar made it clear to the Viceroy that if this was not done, the League Members would forfeit the right to be in Government and should be asked to quit, the Viceroy adopted an attitude of complete helplessness so far as his being able to influence Jinnah was concerned and expressed an absolute unwillingness to ask the League Members to quit. Jinnah, on the other hand, stated that the Congress itself had no right to be in the Interim Government since they had not accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan, and that the interpretation that the Congress Working Committee had put on the grouping procedure was untenable. Constitutionally, therefore, the position reached a stalemate, administratively the gulf widened and Government became increasingly difficult. At the same time, the date for the convening of the Constituent Assembly drew nearer and it was by now quite evident that the League would not join. In order to make a final bid to resolve the crisis, the Viceroy invited, on behalf of the Prime Minister of England, Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel, Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh to a conference in London on 2 Decem-

ber 1946. Sardar refused to go as he felt that no useful purpose would be served by the Conference. On the other hand, he was apprehensive that it might give the Labour Government an opportunity of giving further concessions to the League. Pandit Nehru was also hesitant but he could not say no to a last-minute appeal from Lord Attlee, which was addressed to him as well as to Sardar. Pandit Nehru went to London accompanied by Sardar Baldev Singh. On the League side, both Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan accepted the invitation as usual after waiting for the Congress response. The conference met in London and the result fully bore out Sardar's apprehensions. On the grouping procedure, Lord Attlee made it clear that the Cabinet Missions' own thinking was against the Congress Working Committee's interpretation. On the question of the League participation in the Constituent Assembly or on the question of the League Members of the Coalition Government quitting office on their failure to act up to the assurance given by Jinnah to the Viceroy, the London Conference made no contribution whatsoever, beyond expressing a pious hope that such a situation would not arise. Pandit Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh returned post-haste to Delhi to be in time for the Constituent Assembly's first session. Jinnah and Liaqut Ali Khan, however, remained behind for a few days and in a speech in London Jinnah adhered to his usual militancy and took an uncompromising stand on participation in the Constituent Assembly discussions. It was by then clear that the Constituent Assembly would have to meet without the League representatives.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly was held as scheduled amidst mixed scenes of enthusiasm and protests. The League representatives were absent en bloc. Nevertheless it was one of the most moving scenes when the basic resolution regarding objectives was moved by Pandit Nehru in a brief but impassioned oration. After a short discussion, the Constituent Assembly adjourned after electing Dr. Rajendra Prasad as President and expressing the hope that the members of the League would attend by the time the Assembly met next on 20 January. However, when it met, it faced a worse situation created by the meetings of the AICC and the Muslim League Working Committee. A regular duel between the Congress and the League ensured over the points of interpretation and it was clear that the Constituent Assembly could never function as it was envisaged under the Cabinet Mission Plan. The resolution on objectives was passed ; some important committees were appointed, but the League seats were kept vacant and controversial matters were avoided. However, the demands were now publicly voiced that the League Members should quit and the matter was also taken up by the Congress Members. Sardar's own attitude, which he made clear in a Press statement was that the Congress and the Muslim League could not both remain in the Interim Government and that the League must either withdraw from the Interim Government or revise its Karachi decision.

Four

Progress towards the parting of the ways

THE MOST important administrative preparatory measure for the transfer of power was the liquidation of the Secretary of State's Services and their replacement by Indian Services. Sardar realised the need for quick decisions in regard to the structure of the services and the manner in which he was able to secure the consent of the large majority of provinces for the formation of two All India Services has already been described. He asked the Home Department to go full-steam ahead in working out the details of the scheme. This meant the determination of the cadres and their strength, the programme of recruitment, the laying down of qualifications and the determination of the conditions which the new recruits were to fulfill. So far as the pay-structure was concerned, the Chief Ministers had already settled a basic scale. Sardar was not quite happy with the earlier slabs in that scale but in deference to the wishes of Govind Ballabh Pant and B.G. Kher, he accepted a lower start and smaller increments in the initial stages. The major question of the liquidation of the Secretary of State's Services still remained. The Secretary of State had indicated that this liquidation should be based on a scheme of payment of compensation for both Indian and European Members of the Services, depending on their length of service. He had also indicated that with effect from the prescribed data, these Services would cease to exist and there would be no transfer of personnel from the British Government to the new Indian Government. It was for the Indian Government to negotiate the terms of employment with those who were willing to continue under the new dispensation. Sardar's reaction to this scheme was very adverse. His stubborn opposition and the support of Liaquat Ali Khan to his point of view, which he secured after discussion with him, made it necessary for the Viceroy to reconsider the matter. Finally, after correspondence between him and the Secretary of State, it was decided that the Under Secretary of State, Arthur Handerson, accompanied by an India Office official, should visit India for negotiations with Sardar. Sardar's case had to be prepared in the light of the history of the Services and the contractual as well as factual position which had obtained during the series of reforms and amendments of the Government of India Act, which had been introduced in the country. The main burden of preparing

this case fell on me, and I did so in consultation with the then Deputy Secretary in charge of Services, P.V.R. Rao, since obviously neither from the Home Secretary nor from the Joint Secretary in charge of Services, Williams, could Sardar have expected any unbiased approach to this problem. A brief for Sardar was prepared as if we were preparing a case for an eminent counsel. Sardar studied the brief thoroughly and after seeking some further clarifications, was finally ready for the 'fray'.

Arthur Handerson was to come in January 1947, and Sardar utilised the interim period for a visit to the scenes of his former triumphs in Gujarat—triumphs achieved not only during the struggle, but also during the performance of those marvels of constructive work which he had sponsored and inspired, and which had become models of constructive work for the rest of the country. I had the privilege of accompanying him during his tour and saw with my own eyes what unstinted admiration and hero worship he commanded wherever he went. He took pains to explain to me as often as he could, the significance of every place and the work that was being done. I remember particularly the gleam in his eyes and the pride with which he pointed to the tree at Ras under which he was arrested in 1930, in advance of the other political leaders of the Congress. During these travels, we went to Ahmedabad, Anand, Nadiad, Karamsad, his birth place, Ras, Borsad and Bochasan. At almost every place he visited or passed through, he recalled the history of the freedom struggle, in which these places very prominently figured. He related many an anecdote of his dealings with Shillidy, and Garrett who was the Commissioner of Ahmedabad at the time, and also recounted the story of the decoits that at one time infested Charottar. I remember how, at the end of the tour, I summed up Gujarat's devotion to Sardar, for K. Gopalaswamy of the *Times of India* who was accompanying us in the tour, in the following Urdu verse:

Is Janune Ishaq Par Qurban Hon Hushiarian
Fauj Diwani Rahe Sardar Diwana Rahe

(On this ecstasy of love may many gleams of wisdom be sacrificed ; may the Sardar and his army remain spell-bound in their devotion to each other). There was, however, one regret during this otherwise pleasant and instructive tour, namely, two attacks of malaria which Sardar had, once in Ahmedabad itself and a second time during these travels.

This sojourn in Gujarat was for me significant from another, personal point of view. Apart from the opportunity it gave me of watching Sardar with his own men in his own surroundings and in the midst of old scenes, it provided me with unmistakable evidence of the affection that he had for me and the watch that he kept over my welfare. The tour was in circumstances and conditions to which I was unused. We had to stay sometimes in school buildings and conditions to bathing and hygiene were not those to which I was used. Sardar was always anxious to see that, on

account of all this, I was not inconvenienced, and made frequent enquiries of Maniben as to how I was getting on. If he found that anything could be done to make me more comfortable, he not only issued instructions but also saw to it that they were carried out. One incident of his watchfulness for my welfare I shall always cherish with gratitude. We were staying in a school and his cot, Maniben's and mine were in the verandah, at a few feet distant from each other. The place was full of mosquitoes but there was a shortage of mosquito nets. I slept without one. During the night I was restless due to the constant attacks of these insects. It was only towards the morning that, through sheer exhaustion, I could get some sleep. I had not realised that during the night Sardar himself had sensed my predicament and when he got up in the morning he told Maniben either to get another mosquito net or to have his own transferred to my cot. When I saw in the evening the cots laid out, mine fully equipped with the mosquito net and his without one, I was told what had led to the change; I could not but feel overwhelmed and tried my best to have the mosquito net returned to the cot to which it belonged. Ultimately, somebody else obliged by lending his own for the period of our stay.

I also found that wherever we went, Sardar always inspected my room to ensure that everything was all right. He, on his part, also noticed that I never asked for anything and was quite adoptable to the changed conditions of living and to the inconvenient modes of travel, which sometimes we had to bear patiently. The habit of satisfying himself about my comforts persisted throughout the period of my association with him. Only later, when he became physically less fit, did he content himself by asking me, instead of seeing things for himself. Altogether, it was an experience which would move even a stone to respond in a befitting manner, to a person much more impressionable like myself this display of regard and affection could not but be captivating.

We returned from the tour to find ourselves again in the midst of a crisis. The tension between the League Members and the Interim Government had grown. Apart from the administrative deadlocks and disputes, the political difference had widened into a yawning gap. A meeting of the A.I.C.C. had been called in mid-January to consider the position created by the statement of the British Government issued at the end of the London Conference in early December. The A.I.C.C. at that time had the advantage of Gandhiji's presence and it was a full dress debate over the constitutional and political problems. There was nothing new, however, that emerged from the discussion except that the feelings of frustration, bitterness and of annoyance had become more intense and pronounced. Soon after the session was over Sardar had another attack of flu-cum-malaria which kept him in bed for four or five days. It was during this time that Arthur Handerson visited Delhi. Sardar had two meetings with him, one when he was well enough and the second in which he held his discussions from his sick bed. At both these discussions Sardar

was assisted by me. Arthur Handerson and his India Office official represented the Secretary of State. Sardar marshalled his arguments like a highly competent lawyer. He did not refer to me for facts more than three or four times during the entire discussion and readily met any points which Arthur Handerson and his experienced aide made. The main points that Sardar made were that the Secretary of State entered into a covenant with the members of the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police on behalf of the Indian Government, since he had the contractual authority prescribed under the Government of India Act, and that the contractual position did not obtain as between the British Government and the officers concerned. He also told Henderson that the Government of India could be obliged to compensate only those officers whose services it did not require, but if it was willing to continue the services of any one, there was no legal liability for compensation. So far as the Indian members of the Services were concerned, Sardar considered it absurd that a foreign authority should require the Indian Government to compensate its own nationals. In fact, he felt that the Indian officers of the two Services could not even have the option of continuing in service or retiring, and that they had to be transferred to the Indian Government, lock, stock and barrel.

Arthur Henderson gave his arguments as well as he could, but could not convince Sardar. After the talks were over, they had some political discussions between themselves in which Sardar asked him to convey to the Secretary of State, Lord Pethick Lawrence, his views about the situation created by the Viceroy's hastiness in getting the League Members in, without their satisfying the agreed conditions, and the need for a clear-cut decision by the British Government on the competence of the League Members to continue in the Interim Government. He also emphasised that the League must conform to the scheme of the Constituent Assembly and take their allotted places in that august gathering. After the talks were over and as I conducted Arthur Henderson to the waiting car, the latter expressed to me his sense of amazement at the manner in which Sardar grasped the entire question of liquidation of the Secretary of State's Services and the mastery of the subject that he had shown during that discussion. He told me that so far, he had only heard about his strength and his determination but now he had got in addition a glimpse into his mind and proof of his intelligence and ability. He particularly mentioned that the clarity of his mind, even during the attack of fever, was a revelation.

After the meeting of the A.I.C.C. and the meeting of the League Council that followed, both reiterating with even greater vehemence their respective points of view, it seemed quite clear that the British Government would have to do something to resolve the crisis. Both the organisations waited for the next move to come from London. Sardar had become quite weak, and it was decided between us that he might take a little respite at his favourite place, Bardoli Ashram where there would be

comparative peace, with congenial surroundings and a less rigorous climate than in Delhi. We accordingly went there and for the first time I moved over fields and lands that still seemed to recount the history of the struggle which Sardar won with consummate ability and skill eighteen years earlier. It was my first view of the hardy peasantry that had carved for itself a permanent niche in the Hall of Fame, as heroes of the freedom struggle. In practically every village there was some incident of that struggle to recall and Sardar's progress from the station to the Ashram was as triumphant as that of a returning hero could ever have been in ancient Greece or Rome. The Ashram itself was an example of an organised life that was of a piece with Gandhian ideas and principles. Sardar's residence was in a two-storeyed structure, built especially for him and at some distance was his bathroom in the English style originally built for Gandhiji for his post-massage bath. By this time I had become quite used to the conditions which generally obtained in Gujarat villages and Ashrams and even though Sardar insisted that I should use his bathroom, I preferred to use the other. We all dined in an assembly and partook of the food that was prepared for the Ashram inmates. There were the usual evening prayers, followed by Sardar's speeches and his meetings with construction workers, particularly from the neighbouring tribal areas. Sardar utilised this period of comparative calm and quiet in Bardoli for some serious and sustained thinking on the question of India's constitutional problems. By this time, he had become convinced that a partnership with the League was likely to be not only a permanent source of nuisance and conflict to the Congress, but it was also going to cause a festering wound in the body politic. The administrative difficulties of the Government, owing to daily disputes between its two wings, had widened the distance between them and with the passage of time, the tension as well as uneasiness increased rather than diminished. What was worse, the malady had spread from the politicians to the administrators and the affected the relationship between the officers of the same Services. The European element had practically lost its interest in the administration. In fact, if it had time for anything it was for creating more difficulties rather than solving them. Some of the members of the Viceroy's Secretariat felt that in socially bringing the Congress and the League Members together, they might promote the cause of understanding. They little realised, however, that, that cause could be served better by their creating reconciliation in wider fields than in the drawing room. Even as early as 1924, the first Labour Secretary of State, Lord Olivier, had expressed in Parliament, his belief in the sympathies of the British officialdom for Muslim interests. Now that the final parting of the ways was coming, no doubt largely because of Congress struggle and agitation, that sympathy, really speaking, became a movement. It permeated many more persons and much more deeply than was realised before or is remembered now. So far as the Hindu and Muslim members of the two Services were concerned there was a general recognition of the fact that their sympathies in the

field of administration or in the wider field, unmistakably lay with the Congress and the League respectively. In such a situation, the administrative organisation became a house divided against itself and the steel frame which was declared by the Prime Minister of Britain at one time to have held the country together, had begun to show signs of cracking. In fact, it could well be said that the key Services were no longer one, but had been split into three camps, and that the structure which had been so patiently built over a hundred years, had been compartmentalised in a manner that was never before contemplated.

On one side, the administrative confusion was threatening to turn into chaos, on the other, Sardar had to reckon with the implications of the difference of opinion between the British Government and the Congress, in regard to the interpretation of the grouping proposal prescribed in the Cabinet Mission Plan for the drawing up of the constitution of the Union and the States. He was beginning to have second thoughts on the question of distribution of powers between the Union and the States prescribed in the Cabinet Mission Plan. The events and developments since October 1946, with the League intransigence increasing and Hindu-Muslim tension mounting had made a deep impression on Sardar. He began to doubt in his own mind the wisdom of a weak Centre which the Cabinet Mission Plan contemplated. He even visualised the prospect of the withdrawal of the League-dominated units from participation in the Union and virtually forming a separate federation if they were so inclined. In such a situation, he thought that the Union strength, divided into two armed camps, would become dissipated and a civil war or splitting of the Union into two or more units would then become inevitable. Instead of letting that situation develop at the cost of the progress of the country, as a whole, he began to think in terms of a separation right.

As he was expressing some thoughts on these lines to me, I ventured to suggest whether the acceptance of Dominion Status by India could not stave off these possibilities. In my own way, I first developed the idea, during my talks with Gopalaswamy, when we were having lunch together. Sardar, who was closeby overheard bits of our conversation. Later he called me and enquired what it was that I was discussing with Gopalaswamy. I told him in brief my analysis of the situation which, in its content agreed with the vague hints which he himself had given me of the shape of things to come. I felt that the attitude of the British Government might change if they thought that the Congress was inclined to agree to Dominion Status. I suggested to Sardar very humbly, as this was really my first discussion with him on any important constitutional matter, that the Congress was running great risks in fighting two entrenched forces at the same time. One was the Muslim League which had strengthened its organisation and acquired popular support among the Muslim masses. I explained that the League was in a position to cause the Congress considerable embarrassment by offering baits to Scheduled Castes, to the Sikhs and finally to the Princes. This the League could do without scruples

since, in the first place, it was not committed to any ideology and could make expediency its guiding star and, secondly, it could make promises which would not affect Muslim interests but would seriously prejudice the nationalist outlook and encroach on nationalistic preserves. The second force was British officialdom, which basically, so far as India was concerned, was anti-Congress, through the advent of the Labour Government had somewhat weakened that particular character of the British authority in India. I put it to him that the Labour Government's handling of the constitutional problems up-to-date had shown that they would not completely ignore the League. On the other hand, they would try their best to appease it with a view to securing its consent to the final transfer of power on the basis of the Cabinet Muslim Plan. I said that the fact that they were prepared to ignore the demand of the Congress Members vis-a-vis withdrawal of the Muslim League Members in the Interim Government, despite the Viceroy's assurance held out on behalf of Jinnah, was sufficient proof of the extent to which the Labour Government was helpless in dealing with the League prevarication. Having regard to all this, I suggested, for his consideration, whether it would not be expedient to think of the Dominion Status concept, partly because essentially it did not dilute Independence in the real sense, and partly because after seeing the Congress committed to that concept the British sympathy might not be so much against the Congress itself. I also added that the Congress organisation, by strengthening the hands of the Labour Government in Britain, might be able to secure for itself a better deal from the Labour Government as well as the British public than was the case then. Sardar listened to me very attentively but did not say either yes or no.

The next morning he sent for me. He said that my analysis of the situation did not differ in essentials from his own and that the line of action that I had suggested was worth considering but this might be possible if there were indications that it would result in an early departure of the British. He felt that the longer they stayed in the country the more difficult the settlement would become and the greater would be the mischief played by the unruly elements in India. By that time, he had become aware of what the Political Department was thinking in regard to the future of the Princes and was also aware of the part that was being played by the Viceroy's Advisors in promoting the interests of the League. This was the first time Sardar mentioned to me that he was seriously perturbed over all this because he was apprehensive of an approaching balkanisation of the country if no bold action was taken to stop it. He felt that even if we succeeded in persuading the League to come into the Constituent Assembly and eventually hammered out some sort of a constitution in line with the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Central Government that was envisaged under the Cabinet Mission Plan, would not be able to deal effectively with the tendency towards balkanisation. He felt that the League would always promote these fissiparous tendencies in order, eventually, to secure Pakistan, even though temporarily they might accept the

Cabinet Mission Plan. He even visualised that the preliminary grouping procedure and discussions themselves might create an opportunity for the League actively to promote the breaking up of the country into two or three or even more authorities and that might spell disaster and ruin for India as we knew it. He, therefore, thought that if he was convinced that the British Government would leave India quickly enough, it might be possible to work on the idea of the Dominion Status that I had suggested. He was particularly worried about the Punjab and Bengal, including Assam.

Whilst Sardar was in this frame of mind, he returned to Delhi, only to find administratively, things having come virtually to a standstill. This was not, as Maulana Azad has argued in his book *India wins Freedom* because Liaquat Ali Khan had the Finance portfolio and they could apply the axe ; it was because of the division of the Government into two at the very top. On every conceivable issue of importance it was not merit that governed the decision but political predilections and sympathies of the two blocs. In such a situation, obviously either matters were postponed or the final decision forced by a majority which, in itself, reduced the prospects of satisfactory implementation; often what was settled in principle was substantially smothered in detail. Facing the actualities of the situation Sardar was even more convinced, after his return from Bardoli, that time was of the essence in solving the problem. The statement of Prime Minister Attlee on 20 February 1947 to some extent, promised to meet the condition which was troubling Sardar, viz., the prospect of the earlier departure of the British. This statement indicated that power would be transferred to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. If, by that time, no Central authority could be set up, the Central Government would have to consider to whom the powers of the Central Government of British India should be handed over on that due date, i.e. whether as a whole to some form of Central Government in British India, or in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments, or in such other ways as might seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people. The declaration appeared to confirm Sardar's fears of multiple authorities springing up in the country to take over power from the departing British. The declaration had left the position regarding the Princes uncovered and Sardar felt that the possibility of some sort of 'Rajasthans' developing in the regions of Indian India could not be ruled out. The spectre of balkanised India could not but confirm Sardar's line of thinking which he had developed at Bardoli and the events that swiftly followed in the wake of this declaration finally helped him to make up his mind. These events were the start of the 'Direct Action' in Assam; the forced resignation of Malik Khizar Hayat Khan's non-League Ministry in the Punjab on 2 March 1947 and the invitation to the League to form the Ministry in that province; a virtual declaration of war by the Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh, against the League; the outbreak of communal riots all over the Punjab resulting in

the Governor taking over the administration of the Province; and the perpetration of brutalities on a large scale in Rawalpindi, Lahore and other cities of the Punjab. Sardar watched these developments with apprehension and dismay and seeing the writing on the wall took a definite line when the Congress Working Committee met early in March. Gandhiji was at the time in Bihar trying to restore the damage that had been done by the riots in the preceding October. The Working Committee resolution, after reviewing the events and assessing the position, held out the prospect of a division of the Punjab into two Provinces and also asked the British Government to transfer power to an Indian Dominion. It was not as if Sardar found in Partition a convenient means of purchasing peace. He felt strongly that, so long as the Muslim League communalism was as uncompromising as it was, there was no prospect of the country making any economic or administrative progress, and since he was not prepared to subject that progress to the League veto, he felt that it would be much better if three-fourths of India could be left to work out its own future and destiny without the dead-weight of the League influence. Partition was then a price worth paying for the prosperity of the rest of India and the evolution of its future untrammelled by a weak centre, a Mulsim Veto, and perpetual accusations of the tyranny of the majority over the minority.

The second significant statement made by Prime Minister Attlee on 20th February, was the announcement that Lord Wavell would be succeeded as Viceroy in March by Viscount Mountbatten, who would be assigned the task of transferring to Indian hands responsibility for the Government of India 'in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India'. These two features of the statement, namely, on one side a definite date for the transfer of power and on the other, the change in Viceroyalty were, from the Congress point of view, most welcome. The first feature imparted a tempo and urgency to constitutional and administrative issues involved in the transfer of power while the second held out some promise and hope of a change in the Viceregal outlook which had become associated so with a partiality for the League.

The new Viceroy had no pronounced inclinations or definite alignment on this account. He had acquired a knowledge of India during the time that he held command of South-East Asia operations. He was comparatively young and had a reputation for dash and enterprise. His experience of co-ordination and streamlining of action in the defence sphere raised hopes of a similar approach in regard to the details of the transfer of power. It was also known by this time that the new Viceroy would be accompanied by a staff of his own choice though he would be taking the assistance of Lord Wavell's Secretariat as well. The setting of a definite date for the transfer of power by the British Government was taken as a challenge to Indians to set their own house in order and prepare for the achievement of Independence in little more than a year's time. The change in the Viceroyalty gave Indian opinion a welcome relief from the deep-

seated prejudices which had come to the fore, particularly during the last six months and indicated that the British Government was prepared for a new line and a new approach in the personal handling of the negotiations leading to the transfer of power. The debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons that followed, further reassured Indian public opinion. Both debates revolved round the domestic issue of whether India should be allowed to slide down the path of anarchy or chaos or whether the British Government should administer a shock to Indian public opinion in order to secure an agreement amongst the Indian parties for transferring British dominion over India to Indian control. But in the House of Lords two die-hards, the late Sir Samuel Hoare (Viscount Templewood) and the late Sir John Simon, both transferred to a venue which had been aptly described as 'the Westminister Abbey of living celebrities', represented the first point of view and did not hesitate to call the declaration an unconditional surrender. A different point of view was expressed not only by government spokesmen in both the Houses but also by Lord Halifax (who as Lord Irwin signed the famous Gandhi-Irwin pact) who said that every solution of the Indian problem was fraught with the gravest danger and that he was not prepared to condemn His Majesty's Government for what they were doing unless he could honestly recommend a better solution. It was one of the most effective contributions that had ever been made to a debate and it was this intervention which forced Viscount Templewood to withdraw his motion. In the House of Commons, Sir Stafford Cripps effectively demonstrated how the withdrawal of the British Government from India would be in the British interest itself. Winston Churchill, who participated in the debate in the House of Commons condemned the declaration and in doing so, made an astounding prophecy which he must had have occasion to regret in later years. He said, 'in handing over the Government of India to these so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain.' The winding up speech of the Prime Minister was a masterly performance. He particularly emphasised the dangers of delay and of hanging on, which were as great as the dangers of maintaining the status quo. He characterised the new Viceroy's mission as a mission not of betrayal, but of fulfilment. The motion of censure was defeated by an overwhelming majority of votes.

In the meantime, the Working Committee's resolution had created quite a stir particularly with its emphasis on the acceptance of Dominion Status as an interim measure and on its suggestion for the partition of the Punjab on communal lines. It was subsequently explained by Pandit Nehru to the Viceroy that the same principle would have to apply to Bengal also. He explained this change in the Congress approach by saying that recent events in the Punjab had conclusively established that no minority could be coerced into submission whether it was Muslim or non-Muslim. He also suggested that in the event of the Muslim League not

accepting the Cabinet Mission Scheme and not coming into the Constituent Assembly the division of Bengal and the Punjab would become inevitable. This change in attitude of the Congress was brought about partly as a result of a number of deputations from Bengal and Punjab since the so-called Deliverance Day of 16 December, which was the starting point of the communal holocaust throughout the country.

The budget was announced by Liaquat Ali Khan as Finance Member in the Legislative Assembly. It contemplated a 25 per cent tax on business profits of more than one lakh of rupees and the appointment of an Income Tax Investigation Commission to go into instances of tax evasion, imposing drastic penalties on those who were found guilty. There is an interesting history preceding the announcement of the budget. According to the well-established procedure the budget was not discussed in the full Council except on the last day so that the actual responsibility for the approval of the budget proposal in effect fell on a small body of Members of the Council. In this case the proposals were discussed and finalised between Lord Wavell, Liaquat Ali Khan, Pandit Nehru and John Mathai. When these proposals were divulged to the members of the Cabinet, Sardar instinctively realised that the blow was aimed at the business community which was predominantly Hindu and was convinced that if these proposals were given effect to, they would paralyse both Commerce and Industry in a manner which would seriously retard the country's economic progress. He immediately expressed his dissent. Pandit Nehru was somewhat taken aback by Sardar's dissent. He had confidence in John Mathai's financial judgement and had felt that the proposals were unobjectionable. With the determined opposition put up by Sardar and supported by some of his colleagues, the Viceroy had no alternative but to suggest that the matter might be further discussed among the leading Members of the League and the Congress in Council. Finally, after these discussions and due to the skilful handling of the matter by Lord Mountbatten the budget proposals were modified, not in a manner which eliminated the objectionable features but which nevertheless softened their rigour and minimized the effect of the blow.

Five

The new Viceroy and the die is cast

LORD WAVELL left India amid general relief but to the regret of the Muslim League. When he left the situation was much worse than what it was when he assumed office four years earlier, or what prevailed in 1945 when he held his famous Simla Conference that seemed to promise so much but achieved so little. None could question the heavy burden that Lord Wavell carried on his shoulders or his sincerity of purpose and the desire to serve India's interests as he saw them, to all of which Pandit Nehru paid a handsome and even generous tribute. But the fact remained that, surrounded as he was by a set of advisers whose alignment was pronounced and whose sympathies were unmistakable, together with his lack of political experience he could not see much beyond his restricted vision, whereas the political situation demanded a breadth of outlook, sympathetic imagination and liberal spirit.

It was towards the end of March that the new Viceroy arrived in India. Not even the most optimistic prophet could have foreseen then that the whole situation would change as if by a magic wand within the course of the next two or three months. Lord Mountbatten was faced with tremendous tasks and more onerous responsibilities then perhaps fell to any Viceroy in the entire history of British Rule in the country. India was at that time in a state of ferment. The tension between Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and Muslims on the other had led to outbreaks of arson, rioting and murder in the major cities of British India especially in the Punjab. Elsewhere too, particularly in the *Jat* area surrounding Delhi, in west U.P. and in parts of the country where the Hindu and Muslim population showed signs of antagonism to each other, the atmosphere was explosive. It seemed as if a powder magazine had been kept ready for the least spark to set fire to it. Politically, the League and the Congress represented two 'armed camps'. Of the other parties, the Sikhs were both apprehensive and militant. Others were in a state of confusion and uncertainty as to which way the wind would blow. The Prime Minister's declaration of 20 February made no reference to their problem. The Political Department actively preserved the shadow of the British Empire at least in that part of India over which they had dominated so long, namely the Princely States, so that they could proudly look upon the vestige of

British Rule in at least one-third of India which was at one time the brightest jewel in the British Crown. The Services were hopelessly divided between the British element, which did not want to go but had to, the Muslims who did not want to remain in united India and considered it their religious duty and inviolable obligation to prepare for the Pakistan that was to come, and the others who shared with the Congress the attachment to a united India but who saw the writing on the wall and were dismayed at the prospect of country-wide trouble, dissensions and divisions.

The situation was thus such as would have taxed the talent, patience and determination of some of the strongest British political personalities. It is well-known that within three months, three luminaries of the British Cabinet had almost come to a dead end while grappling with the Indian political problem. It was a last-minute move that saved the plan and also their reputation. In such circumstances, it was interesting that the choice of the Cabinet fell on a distinguished and brilliant military Commander of the last war; one who had hitherto given ample proof of a sense of strategy, skill and enterprise in naval manoeuvres and combined defence exercises and campaigns but who had not so far shown any preference, let alone genius, for political battles. The new Viceroy, however, had the great asset that had been denied to his predecessors. He enjoyed the confidence of all political parties in Great Britain and had access not only to the Crown but to all the leading political leaders of that country. His second enviable asset was his most able and charming wife who radiated charm and goodwill wherever she went. She was a tireless and indefatigable social worker who created broadening circles of friendship and sympathy. She also had a flair for organisation.

Lord Mountbatten did not take long to settle down to his responsibilities. There was hardly any time to lose. The tasks that were awaiting him were not only overwhelming but brooked no delay. The state of tension in the country was mounting as every day passed. The expectancy of a change that had been aroused was adding to that tension. The stalemate in the political relationship between the League and the Congress which was in evidence a few years back had now changed into open and sometimes undignified hostility. The minorities were impatient to know their future. The state of inertia in the administration which had been reached shortly after the coming of the League into the Government and the open, unhealthy rivalry that had overtaken the different wings of administration could not also last long without doing irreparable damage to the country. Moreover, if the schedule of transfer of power by June 1948 had to be adhered to and implemented in conditions of intransigence on the part of the two leading political organisations, Lord Mountbatten had to take up the threads of activity at one.

The British outlook, particularly that of the officialdom towards Indian problems, sometimes led them to prefer the shadow to the substance. An earlier evidence of this approach was the pathetic belief that

was entertained even in the Viceroy's Secretariat that by bringing the two parties into social contact, particularly round the dinner tables, the tension could be reduced or the ice between them cracked. Perhaps it was an extension of this outlook that made Lord Mountbatten believe that a statement from Gandhiji and Jinnah making a joint appeal for peace and denouncing the use of force for the achievement of political objectives could bring about the prevalence of a peaceful atmosphere. Lord Mountbatten set about the task of persuading the two leaders to issue this appeal in right earnest and his efforts were crowned with success The result was hailed as a signal achievement but in substance it really meant nothing because the state of tension was in no way lessened. In fact, within a few weeks the outbreak of communal warfare covered areas within only a few miles of the capital. However, this effort was consistent with the role which had been assigned by the British Government to Lord Mountbatten, namely, as the seeker of unity between the two major parties and through whom the tangled web of India's constitutional problems could be unrivalled. There is no doubt that the British Government sincerely believed in the possibility of a united India through the mechanism provided in the Cabinet Mission Plan and intended to bring into such a structure the Indian States as well. They were also conscious of the paramount need of maintaining India's defence system intact and in the state of efficiency which it had reached during the Second World War. For all these objectives, it was necessary that the Congress and the League should come closer together and it was this task that Lord Mountbatten immediately addressed himself.

Gandhiji's attitude in regard to the political impasse was drastic and revolutionary. He was in favour of handing over the reins of Government to Jinnah with a promise of cooperation by the Congress in all measures that the Cabinet might take in the interest of India as a whole. Should Jinnah find himself unequal to this task he was in favour of the Congress being entrusted with the some mandate. He, however, found little support for this idea among his own colleagues and was, therefore, content to leave future negotiations in the hands of the Congress Working Committee. This, of course, meant the triumvirate which thereafter began to function i.e. Pandit Nehru, Sardar and Acharya Kripalani, who was the Congress President. For the Viceroy, however, it was the first two, who were the members of Government and were closer to him, that counted. Jinnah, on the other hand, was out for his pound of flesh and was convinced that there was no scope for or possibility of an agreed solution. He found the situation ideal for bringing about the Pakistan that he greatly desired and shrewd as he was, he was not inclined to miss this golden opportunity for any, to him, foolish ideal of a united India. It is doubtful if Jinnah, intelligent as undoubtedly he was, ever thought of the full consequences of the Pakistan which he fondly propagated to his credulous audiences. For instance, it did not occur to him that his idea of the corridor to unite the two wings of Pakistan was a sheer absurdity. The

very idea of his including in the Pakistan, that was conceived through hate and distrust, large elements of Hindu and Sikh minorities was bound to be opposed tooth and nail not only by these minorities, but by their brethern in the rest of India. Yet, he not only held the field but succeeded in deluding the Muslims of other areas that their interests, even in the separated India, would be protected by him from outside and that he would succeed in getting the Pakistan of his conception. The Congress leadership, on the other hand, had by now realised that it would be almost impossible to prevent Partition but was equally determined not to let the large, concentrated areas of Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab and Bengal be taken away from them. The idea of a corridor remained no more than a talking point so far as negotiations were concerned, but for the Muslims of U.P. and Bihar it still seemed to hold out some hope though ultimately it proved a vain one.

It was in this situation that Lord Mountbatten had to draw up his plans and hold negotiations with the leaders of various parties whom he had summoned to Delhi or enter into discussions with the Governors in the middle of April. It did not take him long to reach a blind alley in the course of his negotiations and discussions and to come to the desperate solution of handing over power to the provinces or to such unions of provinces as would group themselves by the time the actual transfer of power took place. His solution also provided for the division of existing provinces of Bengal and Punjab, of the Muslim districts of Sylhat in Assam being given the option of joining the Muslim provinces of Bengal and ascertaining in the N.W.F.P., the wishes of the people of that province. It was clear that so far at the transfer of authority to the provinces was concerned the plan suited Jinnah. In so far as it conceded the idea of a partition of provinces, it suited the Congress. The holding of an election in the N.W.F.P., however, raised problems of a different nature. That province had returned a Congress Ministry with an overwhelming majority in the previous elections. Since those elections formed the entire basis of forming the Constituent Assembly and steps leading to the transfer of power, it was illogical that to satisfy the League another election should be held as a mode of ascertaining the wishes of the people. At that election the province had virtually accepted the leadership of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan known as the Frontier Gandhi who was passionately devoted to peace and non-violence and believed in Indian unity. He was the leader of the Red Shirt Movement which had undoubtedly created a different psychology in that Province from that normally ascribed to it in history. His brother, Dr. Khan Saheb, as Chief Minister, was the head of a Ministry which had created a feeling of confidence among the minorities of the Province and he had governed fairly well over a most difficult area. Both of them were at that time in Delhi and almost in hourly contact with Pandit Nehru and Sardar. It was clear from the developments that were taking place in the neighbouring province of Punjab that it would be difficult for them to hold in check Muslim

fanaticism in the N.W.F.P. and it was an open secret that in the event of a choice between Pakistan and India the majority would find it difficult to vote for India. The solution of the Khan brothers with which Sardar was in full sympathy was that a third option should be given, namely that of Independence To this solution Lord Mountbatten and His Majesty's Government were uncompromisingly opposed, although under Mountbatten's own plan, if that province decided not to join a group it could obtain a transfer of power to itself. In retrospect I cannot avoid the impression that this concession was made to the League in the knowledge that the result would be favourable to it.

Once the outline of Mountbatten's plan became known to the people in Delhi and outside, feverish activity took hold of them. Among the first to act were the Hindu and Sikh legislators of the Punjab who met in New Delhi and passed a resolution in favour of division of that Province. In the meantime, Congress opinion had veered round to the view that no minorities could be coerced into accepting Partition just as it could not foist on a majority in any sizable areas, the concept of a United India. The most authoritative pronouncements on the subject came from the Congress Working Committee and the President of the Constituent Assembly Rajendra Prasad, who stated on 28 April 1947, on the floor of the House that the Assembly had to consider the possibility that the Union might not comprise all the Provinces, and that it might have to be content with a part of it. In that context, he envisaged not only a division of India but also a division of some of the Provinces. Jinnah, however, continued to insist on an undivided Punjab and Bengal and considered the partition of these Provinces as 'a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness'. Thus, political India by the end of April 1947 had become seized of the possibility of Partition of the country and of the two Provinces of Bengal and Punjab while Jinnah continued to harbour dreams of including both these Provinces, undivided, into the Pakistan of his imagination.

In the meantime, Punjab was again in a state of unrest and as stated earlier its repercussions reached the adjoining areas of Delhi. The ancient feud between the *Jats* and *Meos* was revived and in the districts of Gurgaon and adjoining areas along with certain notorious areas of Punjab, large scale acts of arson and killing were perpetrated. In this situation Lord Mountbatten's attempt to assuage Muslim opinion in N.W.F.P. by the release of Muslim League agitators did not bear any fruit, and even in that Province disturbances in which Hindus and Sikhs suffered seriously took place. The tribal areas were also roused by Muslim fanaticim. The failure of the joint appeal by Gandhiji and Jinnah, the crystallisation of the attitude of the Congress and the League on the question of Partition and the mounting tension in the Frontier, Punjab, Delhi and elsewhere finally persuaded Lord Mountbatten to finalise his plan on the lines that have already been mentioned and it was with this plan that Lord Ismay, whom Lord Mountbatten had brought with him, and George

Abell, left for London in the first week of May.

Sardar got information regarding this plan through V P. Menon who was almost in daily contact with him and who kept him fully posted with developments in the Viceroy's camp. It was not that this way without the knowledge of Lord Mountbatten. In fact the Viceroy was very keen that he should know the reactions of the Congress High Command to the way his mind was working and if Menon was keeping the Congress circles informed, others were keeping the League circles more than fully in touch with the same. The Viceroy's daily conferences with his advisers were a clearing house of information received from various sources and it would be giving away no secret to mention that whilst Menon was the spokesman for the recations of the Congress leaders there were others closer to the Viceroy who could speak with greater authority for the League. Despite Menon having given a clear indication to the Viceroy of Congress reactions to the transfer of powers to the provinces, Lord Mountbatten persisted in his plan until he was sadly disillusioned in Simla about a week later. In regard to one matter, however, the die was already cast. During Sardar's absence from Delhi on his trip to Bardoli for about four or five days in the middle of April, Lord Mountbatten had mentioned to Pandit Nehru that the option to the Frontier electorate would be limited to choice for Pakistan or India and there would be no option for Independence. This greatly embittered the Khan brothers and the Frontier Gandhi. Dr. Khan Sahib strove hard to avoid this development and felt that the days of the Congress Ministry in the Frontier province were numbered. In fact, the Frontier Gandhi did not conceal his view that the abandonment of the option for Independence by the Congress would constituted a betrayal.

Sardar's reaction to the Mountbatten plan was not only hostile but bitter. In fact, he was affected by a wave of disturst of the Viceroy and his advisers and he genuinely felt that in order to escape their responsibility the British Government would not hesitate to leave India after throwing it into a welter of chaos and anarchy. As a patriotic Indian and a leader of the Congress he felt it his bounden duty to prevent this. By this time he was also convinced that a partnership between the Congress and the League in the administration of the country was impossible. Either the one or the other could alone govern and it was obvious that the League by itself could not do so. At the same time, he realised that the Congress writ would not run in the provinces which had a Muslim majority. This clear position which had emerged from the confusion and uncertainty of the last few months presented a simple solution namely that the Congress should try to salvage as much of the wreck as was possible and let the rest drift like flotsam and jetsam on the troubled waters of the Indian polity. His mind, in favour of the Domination Status concept, had already been made up in February/March. From that idea to a slightly different version of Partition on the basis of two Dominions was not much of a change. For Sardar the Dominion Status con-

cept had acquired another strategic and tactical advantage. He knew how keen the British Government was to retain India within the Commonwealth; he also knew how it would touch Lord Mountbatten's vanity, if he could claim it as an achievement that he could sell the idea of Dominion Status to the Congress leaders. Sardar, therefore, felt that the Dominion idea might make the British Government and Lord Mountbatten more sympathetic to the idea of the rest of India being kept intact as one entity. It was a combination of all these factors that made Sardar accept the idea of Partition on the basis of two Dominions as an alternative to the disasters of Mountbatten's plan of transfer to the provinces. This crystallisation of his views came about towards the end of April just about the time when Lord Mountbatten was finalising his plan. He had decided to send Lord Ismay and George Abell with it to London, and was himself preparing to go to Simla.

In the meantime, a significant step had been taken by Lord Mountbatten which was in line with Sardar's own ideas, namely the liquidation of the Secretary of States Services. As has been stated earlier, Sardar was opposed to the payment of compensation to the Indian Members of the Services and to an option to those members to leave the service at the time of transfer of power. He was also opposed to the payment of any compensation to British members of the Services out of Indian revenues. In these matters there was unanimity of views between him and Liaquat Ali Khan. Realising the force of this united opposition to the British Government's plan, Lord Mountbatten succeeded in evolving a suitable settlement whereby the Secretary of State's Services were to receive compensation from His Majesty's Government and the Indian members of these Services were to be transferred to the new Government or Governments that might be setup. It was, however, agreed between Lord Mountbatten, Pandit Nehru, Sardar and Liaquat Ali Khan that the interests of the Indian members of the Secretary of State's Services would be safeguarded by suitable provisions in the treaty which would be concluded with His Majesty's Government and the Indian authority or authorities. This arrangement had a sequel because subsequently when the question of safeguards for these services came up at the time of constitution-making and Pandit Nehru was reluctant to incorporate a safeguard, Sardar reminded him of what he had accepted in his negotiations with Lord Mountbatten.

During this period Sardar was also greatly concerned with domestic problems; national, administrative and organisational. The disturbances in the Punjab and elsewhere had created the problem of refugees and protection of victims from arson and killing. He had immediately reacted to the situation by launching his own fund for the relief of victims, called the Punjab Relief Fund some time in March 1947. The response to his appeal was both quick and substantial and there is no doubt that schemes of voluntary relief which this fund provided helped in the amelioration of the condition of refugees. The gradual migration of families from the Punjab

and N.W.F.P. brought in its trail problems to Delhi and the other places to which the refugees went. Notwithstanding the secular approach of the Congress organisation the stream of these refugees and their tales of woe and misery began to make an impression. In their mood of bitterness, disillusionment and at times desperation, refugees undoubtedly accentuated the problem of communal tension which had already reached its peak. On the other hand, the League was also organising itself on a militant basis everywhere. With the support that it had of a section of Government and an important element in the administrative machinery, the situation was full of explosive possibilities. Every intelligence organisation from the Central Intelligence Bureau down to the districts had its Muslim element with avowed pro-League sympathies. That put a discount on the main sources of Governments information about the existence of underground and other subversive activities. It also heightened the possibility of sabotage from within. The internal security conditions were thus far from satisfactory and to this unsatisfactory state of affairs was added the confusion and feeling of antagonism among those who could help form opinion in the country. The press was divided into three, Anglo-Indian, Nationalist and Muslim and in particular the cleavage between the latter two in newspapers and periodicals in regional languages was talking the armed camp mentality from the inner counsels of Government to the forums of expression of public opinion. The general freedom of expression that prevailed was being grossly abused and both sides indulged through insinuations, innuendoes, veiled threats and covert designs in the favourite pastime of those days, of influming public opinion and widening communal cleavage.

This situation had more or less continued in some form or the other and in varying degrees of intensity since the parting of the ways between the Congress and the League at the time of departure of the Cabinet Mission. It had, however, become accentuated ever since the Congress assumed office. After the introduction of coalition Government to the poison from without was added the poison from within. With every phase of development reached in regard to the constitutional future of the country the situation worsened and with the imminence of the departure of the British and the prospect of the materialisation of Pakistan, the atmosphere become more poisonous and fraught with danger. There was a weakening of the administrative machinery and prevalence of a state of uncertainty and confusion.

Untrammelled by obstruction from within and unfettered by the cramping opposition from British officialdom, Sardar faced the problems squarely. The increase in the security forces in the provinces and the evoluation of the new administrative Services had already made some difference to the possibilities of effectively dealing with this situation. Notwithstanding the difficulties of securing accurate intelligence reports of the situation, Sardar, because of his own almost unerring judgement and instinct and because of his constant touch with the provincial admi-

nistrations and sympathetic officers, kept himself fully abreast of developments. Even during this difficult period, seldom, if ever, was he caught on the wrong foot. He always had the advantage of forewarning himself and others and was generally ready with the means of dealing with the situation effectively. He had already tightened the law both procedurally and substantively to deal with outbreaks of violence, arson and looting. In so far as he could, he had dealt with the delinquent section of the press with a strong hand. He had also used constructively his undoubted influence with large sections of the press and people. It is through all these means that he had succeeded in maintaining law and order over large parts of the country. In fact, in retrospect, it is surprising, not that so many instances occurred but that many more did not. Whilst we must regretfully take note of those that did, we must not lose sight of the fact that the whole country was sitting dangerously on a powder keg and that there was no dearth of sparks now and then to send it up in flames. That this did not happen was undoubtedly due to the fact that Sardar with the support of the Chief Ministers and Home Ministers of the States and a substantial element in the administrative and security Services, as well as large sections of peace-loving and law abiding citizens was able to isolate the explosive potentialities into comparatively small compartments.

The extension of the area of operations of anti-social elements to the neighbouring areas of Delhi and to Delhi itself, however, taxed Sardar's resources and energies as never before. He personally took charge of affairs on different occasions, as and when he could secure some leisure from the more important affairs of the Congress and the nation. His intervention was always effective in limiting the area of the hostilities and in bringing the situation under control but he was throughout conscious of the severe handicap which was imposed on him by the existance of Governor's rule in the Punjab. The Governor, Sir Evans Jenkins, acted directly in consultation with the Viceroy and his staff and a large part of the British and Indian officialdom in that Province was undoubtedly anti-Congress.

It would be worthwhile quoting a few typical instances of the manner in which Sardar reacted to the stern exigencies of the situation. I recall an argument that developed among the Congress Members of the Cabinet on the question of abolition of death penalty on which a resolution was tabled in the Legislative Assembly by Shri Gopinath Bardoloi. When the matter came up, Pandit Nehru suggested that in keeping with the contents of the Karachi Resolution which was passed under Sardar's presidentship and on ideological grounds, the resolutions should be accepted. Sardar reminded him however, that not many of the contents of that resolution had been put into effect and that in terms of the situation then prevailing this would be the least effective or popular measure, considering that only a few weeks earlier Pandit Nehru had insisted on enhancing the punishments for certain offences so as to include the death

penalty. This put an end to all arguments and we heard no more of the abolition of death penalty.

Similarly, when *Jat-Meo* disturbances started in Gurgaon area, Sardar decided to visit the disturbed villages accompanied by the Defence Minister Sardar Baldev Singh. During his tour he found villages burning on both sides of the road; sometimes our cars and jeeps had to pass between two long tongues of fire. We came across hardly any human beings in those villages except for a few stray persons who told us their tales of woe and misery. It was a case of arson and counter arson, killings and counter killings on a large scale and only after resolute action could the situation be brought under control. The Collector of Gurgaon in those days was a British Member of the Indian Civil Service who had unfortunately created a reputation for an anti-Hindu bias amongst the intelligentsia, including the members of the Gurgaon Bar Association, some of whose members he had put in jail ostensibly for reasons of security but allegedly because they had sponsored bail applications on behalf of the Hindu accused. Unfortunately for him he had compromised himself by a curious endorsement on an application for bail. Sardar took possession of it and when in the course of his tour he caught up with Deputy Commissioner who was going round the disturbed areas, he asked him about these cases. The Deputy Commissioner pleaded with Sardar that his suspicions were ill-founded and after he had protested sufficiently Sardar confronted him with the incriminating document. The Deputy Commissioner, faced with that evidence had no option but to admit his misdemeanor. It is an irony of British Rule of those days that despite this it took some time for Sardar to secure this officer's transfer from Gurgaon. The Governor was adamant and the Viceroy was unable to intervene effectively and expeditioulsy.

The increase in the tempo of disturbances and tension and threats to the peace and integrity of the country which were involved in the proposals which Lord Mountbatten had sent to His Majesty's Government made Sardar act rather swiftly on the political front. At a meeting of the Working Committee which was called in the beginning of May and at which Gandhiji was not present because he was away in Bihar on a mission of rehabilitation of Muslims, it was finally decided to face facts and to accept Partition. Gandhiji felt very disturbed when he heard of this move and wrote in an agitated mood to Sardar expressing his bewilderment at this decision. Sardar gave him a convincing reply. There was, of course, no question of Gandhiji doubting the bona fides either of Pandit Nehru or of Sardar. Gandhiji himself had virtually accepted the germ of partition during his talks with Jinnah some years ago and even though he strained every nerve to secure a united India there was more than one sign to indicate that Gandhiji did realise his helplessness to check the course of events which was inexorably marching towards that hateful destination. For Pandit Nehru and Sardar, however, the position was different. Apart from the League intransigence to which, in view of the

presence of a third party, the Congress had really no effective answer, they knew what was in store for the country if the Mountbatten plan went through and they also knew what it meant to have the Muslim League colleagues in the same Cabinet. From inside Government they had realised what forces were secretly at work to bring about a state of confusion and civil war in the country. They also keenly felt the difficulty of being able to contend with a general conflagration with the security forces divided in their communal sympathies and the whole country thrown into utter confusion by the absence of an integrated and firm administrative machinery. However, the final plunge was taken only when, after the despatch of a messenger to the British Government, Lord Mountbatten with his advisers, including V.P. Menon, took Pandit Nehru to Simla as his guest.

It was this sojourn to the hills, which was intended to be a period of rest and recreation that marked a turning point in the course of constitutional negotiations. V.P. Menon in his book *Transfer of Power* has narrated vividly the story of what transpired in Simla. Lord Mountbatten happened to divulge to Pandit Nehru the plan which he had sent to His Majesty's Government, whereupon Pandit Nehru exploded and was desperately looking for an alternative. At the crucial moment he brought forth the solution that had been discussed earlier with Sardar. Finally Lord Mountbatten changed his plans and the scheme of Partition on the basis of two Dominions was conceived and drawn up. I have only to add to that story what transpired at Delhi where Sardar was every day disturbed and agitated at the prospect of anarchy that was threatening to engulf the country and was waiting for a call from Simla. He knew that discussions on constitutional problems would inevitably take place and that a crisis was about to develop. His mind was already made up and when the telephone call came from Simla he was ready to deal with it. That incident is very vivid in my mind. Maniben, Sardar and myself collected in Sardar's office room after the call came, I think on 9/10 May. The reception was bad because apart from the poor condition of telephone communications between Simla and Delhi, there was interference from Muslim League eavesdroppers. Sardar, who was a little hard of hearing could not follow what V.P. Menon was saying and at the other end Nehru could not hear distinctly what Sardar was saying. Hence the instruments were passed on to V.P. Menon and me. Both of us then began to conduct our conversation as the interpreters of the two illustrious personalities near us, Pandit Nehru near V.P. Menon and Sardar near me. After Menon had given me a gist of what had transpired, which I dutifully conveyed to Sardar, he asked me on behalf of Pandit Nehru to ascertain from Sardar what his views were on the new plan. Sardar conveyed through me to Pandit Nehru that there was no alternative but to accept that plan and that under it we lost only a fraction of India instead of risking the loss of the whole of it. He also told Pandit Nehru that so far as he was concerned he felt that the transfer of power on the

basis of Partition and two Dominions was the surest means of securing whatever peace was possible in this sub-continent and of enabling three-fourths of India to seek its own way of a secular life and economic and administrative development. Pandit Nehru seemed to have received this statement of Sardar's views with satisfaction and relief but he asked Sardar whether the Working Committee and Gandhiji would accept it. Sardar's reply was characteristic of him. He told Pandit Nehru that he accepted full responsibility for seeing the scheme through the Working Committee and so far as Gandhiji was concerned he had no doubt that after initial doubts and scepticism he would give way and see their point of view. Pandit Nehru finally asked Sardar if in that case he should go ahead and Sardar's reply was a very firm affirmative.

It was after this that the negotiations in Simla were continued further, the outline of the 3 June Plan was drawn up and preparations were made for Lord Mountbatten to come to Delhi, meet Acharya Kripalani and Jinnah and his Muslim League associates and then leave for London to have discussions with His Majesty's Government.

Another stroke of strategy and tactics was adopted by Sardar when Lord Mountbatten returned from Simla. I think it was the day after Lord Mountbatten returned that Sardar met him in the afternoon for forty five minutes and it was during this meeting that Sardar after consulting Pandit Nehru conveyed to Lord Mountbatten his own view that he should be the Governor-General of the new Indian Dominion. Lord Mountbatten, however, entertained the vision of being the common Governor-General of the two Dominions. He was naturally elated at the prospect but Sardar had a hunch that he had not taken Jinnah into account. When this subject came up Sardar told him that their decision to have him as Governor-General of India was irrespective of what Jinnah might or might not do. It is now common knowledge that Jinnah subsequently resiled from the commitment that he seemed to have made and became the self-appointed first Governor-General of Pakistan.

Once the course of future constitutional developments was clear, Sardar found some mental peace and quiet and during the time that Lord Mountbatten went to London, Sardar decided to have a week's respite at Mussoorie. All of us left by car for that queen of hill stations. situated closer to Delhi than Simla is; it had also the added advantage that Birla House where he stayed was in a quiet corner of Mussoorie where Sardar could have that restful holiday which he greatly needed after the pre-occupations of last ten months. At Mussoorie, Sardar utilised his time, apart from the disposal of the official business that came from Delhi, in discussions about the details of Partition and in clarifying his mind about the future. He also took long walks both in the mornings and evenings. The morning routine for him was to leave Birla House soon after sunrise after giving me a ring. I left my house on Camel Back Road at about the same time. We met halfway. We would then go up to the library or sometimes up to the Post Office and then to Birla House where we used

to have breakfast, lunch and tea together. After tea we would again leave Birla House and walk up to the Post Office where I would take leave of him to return to my own house. He would then return to Birla House. Throughout, of course, we never could keep to ourselves since a crowd would follow us wherever we went and a number of people would come to Mussoorie from Delhi and other parts of India. They either met Sardar in private interviews or during his walks. Gavind Ballabh Pant, who was then the Chief Minister of U.P. and his entourage were, of course, always at Sardar's beck and call. Pantji shared Sardar's confidence to a degree that few could realise from outside, and both of them used to be locked together in confidential discussions for several minutes off and on. Even during those days, Sardar used to be greatly disturbed by the stream of refugees that was crossing over from the Muslim areas to East Punjab, Delhi and west Uttar Pradesh. Many of them would come to Delhi and Mussoorie to describe to Sardar the widespread sufferings and hardships that were being experienced by the Hindus and Sikhs in North-west India. Hearing these, Sardar became more and more convinced that the Hindu and Sikh minorities had no future in Pakistan. Whilst he did realise the desperateness of their plight, he could not counsel them to make a concerted attempt to leave their homes in the hope that the League leaders might relent and the presence of Muslims in India might yet induce the Muslims of Pakistan-to-be to desist from their mad course of action. He, therefore, advised the Hindus and Sikhs to organise themselves for their own protection and to fight out the battle of their survival. I remember his having told a deputation on one occasion, more or less in Gandhian style that it was better to die fighting than to flee like a coward.

Six

On the way to Partition

A DAY or two before the end of May we returned to Delhi to plunge again into hectic and feverish activities which preceded and followed the announcement of the 3rd June Plan. Lord Mountbatten returned to India within a day or two of our reaching Delhi and immediately set about the discussions on his Plan with the Congress and the Muslim League. His version of those discussions has been vividly described by Campbell Johnson and by V.P. Menon in their books. All that is necessary to add here is that both parties accepted the Plan which Lord Mountbatten brought with him for transferring powers to two Dominions, India and Pakistan, the latter consisting of that part of the Punjab which had a majority of Muslim areas, Sind and N.W.F.P., and East Bengal consisting of majority Muslim areas of the undivided Bengal of those days subject to delimitation of boundries by a Boundary Commission. The general constitutional structure in the interim period was to be that of the Government of India Act of 1935 except that the Governor-General was to be a constitutional head and the powers of the Central Government included not only the powers of the Federal Government under the Government of India Act 1935 but also the powers of the Governor-General to use his discretion or his individual judgement. The Constituent Assembly was divided accordingly into two bodies and in the interim period it was to be the Legislature as well. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues were to be responsible to the respective Legislatures. The assets and liabilities, armed forces and the Services of United India were to be divided between the two Dominions on an agreed basis under the directions of a Partition Council presided over by the Governor-General and consisting of Pandit Nehru, Sardar Patel and Acharya Kripalani on one side and Jinnah, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar on the other. 15 August 1947 was set as the date for the transfer of powers on the basis of the two Dominions and all arrangements were to be made with reference to that date. In the interim period, before 15 August, 1947, the coalition Government was split into two, each section to deal roughly with the Government of India affairs in the broadly defined territories of India and Pakistan. To deal with the problems of Indian States it was decided to set up a Ministry of States in both the sections of the Government of India and a meeting of the negotiating committees of the two Chambers was called in order to prepare the

Indian States for the situation now confronting them consequent to the transfer of powers from British to Indian hands

Once the decision was taken which saved the country from being plunged into anarchy, Sardar began to prepare himself with zest for the new dispensation that was to be brought into being. From the care-worn, anxious, apprehensive and somewhat uncertain man that he was before Lord Mountbatten went to Simla, he had changed after his return to one full of energy, enthusiasm and hope. The change at Mussoorie had received both his drooping spirit and his fatigued frame. He had no illusions about the task that lay ahead of him. With his stern sense of realism and duty, with his administrative grasp and intense practical commonsense it was easy for him to see that the division of the country into two would not only be a tremendous undertaking but a major civil and military operation no less taxing than a redrawal of the map of the entire country. Partition itself involved problems of plebiscite in N.W.F.P., division of the Punjab and Bengal partitioning of assets and liabilities of the Government, temporary arrangements for the functioning of the interim Government, physical movement of the assets of the new Dominions from each other's area, liquidations of the Secretary of State Services, division of the administrative structure into two, the future relationship of the two Dominions not only with the British Government but also with the Indian States and the division of the armed forces and their equipment as well as a host of other problems. The overall body in charge of partition was the Partition Council and below it the Partition Secretariat with smaller committees of representatives of the two future Dominions for almost every department. The main burden at the top level, however, fell on Sardar and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and in the two secretariats on H.M. Patel and Choudhary Mohammad Ali, the former subsequently becoming Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India and the latter Secretary-General to the Pakistan Government. Lord Mountbatten, who knew what a burdensome task the planning and execution of the scheme of Partition was, had evolved ingenious methods of making everybody time-conscious, the most important of which was the calendar which indicated, as every day passed, the fewer and fewer days that were left for the transfer of power on 15 August.

The most difficult problem that faced Sardar was the division of the armed forces and partition of assets and liabilities. Sardar had to familiarise himself not only with the details but also with the broad policy aspects involved and there is no doubt that the two months that he devoted to the settlement of these various issues gave him close familiarity with the affairs of the Government of India. No single member of Government had acquired such a thorough knowledge of the affairs of State at any time in the past since perhaps Lord Curzon in the early decade of this century. But the significant difference between those days and these was that the Government of India had become a more complicated and vast organisation.

Sardar's daily routine underwent a considerable change. Visitors were more or less restricted to his morning walks and one or two hours in the morning. From 9 a.m. to practically 9 p m. his time was spent in a round of discussions, meetings and interviews with many of his colleagues and prominent non-officials whose views and advice were vital to the questions and issues with which he was faced. On practically every issue of division relating to each department he used to hold discussion with the Indian Departmental representatives. He received his final briefing on matters regarding partition from H M. Patel and his other important collaborators in the Partition Secretariat who were authorities on the particular issue involved. Sometimes he had to discuss matters with all the departmental representarives at a meeting. They explained the problems facing them. Sardar used to listen to the exposition attentively and finally gave his direction as to the manner in which H.M. Patel was to tackle the issue in his discussions with his Pakistani counterpart, Choudhary Mohammad Ali. A number of issues were settled on this basis between the two of them. Those that remained and the broader issues of policy were settled in the Partition Council where India's case was invariably opened by Sardar and supported by Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru was then staying in 17, York Road, very near 1, Auranzeb Road, where Sardar resided. They used to meet frequently during the day. This was a period when the two great leaders came very close to each other and also needed each other most. Seldom was the cordiality between the two more noticerble and deeper than during these days and seldom perhaps was Pandit Nehru more content to leave things to Sardar on very vital and important issues. Needless to say that Sardar not only fully justified this confidence but was throughout in excellent shape to be able devote himself to the task with industry, intelligence and zeal. Sardar exercised his vigilance in these matters to a degree which could hardly have been expected of a man of Seventytwo years of age. Not one item of importance escaped his eagle eye and many were the important assets, military and civil, which was saved for the country by his constant vigilance. But for his attitude of watchfulness, care and caution and the zeal and enthusiasm of H.M. Patel and his colleagues in the Partition Secretariat and in the department concerned, the intigues of the Pakistan and British elements would have caused untold losses to the country. Whoever looks at the speed and thoroughness with which the arrangements for Partition were made in such a short time cannot but pay tribute to the illustrious personality whose leadership and guidance were responsible for the country making such a fine start at the time of independence with not only an administrative structure intact, but also with assets available for the further march on the road to progress and development.

Apart from these practical issues which were vast and important enough, the main anxiety of Sardar in those days was in regard to the future of the Indian States. Many of the Indian States were there even before the British period but a number of them were of British creation.

The system, however, that governed the relations with princely States was entirely the evolution of the British regime. This relationship began when the East India Company was led into active hostilities in self-defence; it changed to a system of subsidiary alliance and treaties the latter soon brought the extension of the Company's dominions over most of India and led to the proclamation of British Paramountcy by Lord Hastings in 1818. But Lord Dalhousie's doctrine of lapse on one side threatened the princely States with extinction and on the other brought about a serious threat to the British empire itself. The accumulated discounted burst forth in the form of the Indian Meeting in 1857. After the Indian mutiny, the Crown took over the governance of India, and British policy thenceforward aimed at isolating the Indian Princes into a subordinate existence under the rule of the paramount power. Simultaneously with the introduction of Indian elements into the legislative machinery of British India, attempts were made to capture the imagination of the Princes by a series of Royal visits and Durbars starting with the Durbar of Lord Canning, the highlight being the proclamation of Queen Victoria as the Empress of India, and the Delhi Durbar of 1911 on the succession of King George V to the throne. When finally the Government of India Act of 1919 was passed by Parliament, in accordance with the recommendations of the Joint Report of Edwin Montagu and Lord Chelmsford, a Chamber of Princes was established which was inaugurated by His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught. It was in his speech at that inauguration that the word 'Swaraj' was first used in any authoritative pronouncement. Although the Chamber was intended to provide an opportunity of discussion between the Princes collectively and the Political Department headed by the Viceroy, the proceedings of that Chamber will bear out that the latter effectively controlled the discussions in the Chamber and succeeded in avoiding controversial issues as between them and the Princes. Nevertheless, the progresss of representative Government in some of the leading States like Travancore, Mysore, Baroda, Bikaner, Gwalior and Cochin and the administrative achievements of some others gave the Princes of those States strength to deal with the Agents to the Governor-General in a firm though tactful manner. Barring a few honourable exceptions, the Princes watched with some apprehension, if not hostility, the growth of popular movement in British India and looked askance at the attempts of the Congress to organise their subjects to make similar demands in their respective States.

The idea of a Federation evolved during the days of the Nehru Report of 1928 and which assumed a practical form in the Government of India Act of 1935 after discussions at the three Round Table Conferences and the British Parliament, had taken root. It did not however, command much practical support among the Princes at the time. In fact, by the time the Great War overtook the world, Lord Linlithgow and his representatives had failed to sell the idea of Federation even after making substantial

concessions to the Princes. During the War the Princes secured representation in the National Defence Council that was set up and the British War Cabinet in their own right. The Government of India Act of 1935 had already brought about a complete separation of the Political Department from the rest of the Secretariat of the Government of India and the Governor-General's Executive Council and introduced a new entity namely the Crown representative. The Butler Committee had recommended the recognition of the separate relationship of the Indian Princes from that of British India and this fact received the statutory approval of Parliament in the relevant provisions in the Government of India Act.

Since 1935, therefore, two contradictory forces were at work; one was the British attempt to separate and isolate the Indian Princes from British India through the working of the Crown representative and the Political Department and the other was a common ideology between the peoples of British India and many of the Indian States to seek a democratic future for themselves in their respective spheres. The idea of the two people coming together under one political entity was still in its infancy though on many occasions it was proclaimed from political platforms both in British India and the Indian States.

The Cripp's Mission to some extent, but the Cabinet Mission to a much greater extent, contemplated the inclusion of the Indian States in the future constitutional set up of the country. As the departure of the British drew nearer and nearer and it was on the cards that paramountcy would lapse, it made such an eventuality inevitable though certain States still harboured the designs of separate and independence existence either by themselves or in groups. Those that belonged to this school of thought were the Chancellor, His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal, the Dewan of Travancore State, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer and some of the Kathiawad, Central India and Hill States Rulers. The League for its own reasons pleaded for full freedom to the Princes to decide their future for themselves. The Congress was not prepared to concede this freedom and pleaded for the constitution of a united India including the Indian Princes. It suited Jinnah to introduce a third complication for the Congress. It suited the British element in the country to help and support him in doing so. The task of the Constituent Assembly under these circumstances, to bring the Princes also within its orbit after December 1946 was not an easy one. It was, however, helped in its task by some progressive rulers like the Rulers of Bikaner, Patiala, Gwalior and the representatives of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Mysore and Baroda of whom the more prominent were Brojendra Lal Mittar, Dewan of Baroda and V.T. Krishnamachari, Dewan of Jaipur State. K.M. Panikkar, who represented Bikaner in the Council of Ministers of Indian States, also threw his weight on the side of the progressive elements. The Princes and the Constituent Assembly appointed negotiating committees to work out the basis on which the princes were to participate in the deliberations of the Constituent Assembly, the allocation of seats among the Indian States and the manner in which

these seats should bo filled. Two or three meetings had been held by the time the announcement of Partition was made on 3 June but matters had not progressed much, and only a small number of States had sent their representatives to the Constituent Assembly in April 1947. However, the attitude of the representatives of the Princes at these meetings was not unsympathetic save for a few who harboured dreams of Independence.

In the meetings that had been held so far there was a sharp clash of opinion between the representatives of the Princes and the leaders of the Congress notwithstanding the healthy influence exercised over the Princes by the progressive and forward looking Rulers and Ministers, some of whom have already been mentioned. On the side of the Princes, fears and apprehensions regarding the loss of their influence and the repercussions of democratisation on their own position were restraining them from accepting the suggestions made on behalf of the Congress that a certain elective rather than selective element should be introduced in the choice of the representatives of the States in the Constituent Assembly. Other questions related to their strength and the system of voting on matters that affected the relations of the Princely States with new units. The Princes themselves were informally ranked in a heirarchy based on size and population of their States and the salute of guns to which they were entitled. In addition to these divisions, there were differences based on leadership, personalities of the individuals and regions from which they came. The attitude of some was not unconnected with the bargaining advantage that that they gained by playing the Congress against the League and vice versa. Notwithstanding all this it would be correct to say that the liberalism of the Princes and their Ministers whose names I have given above were a source of great help and strength to Pandit Nehru and Sardar in their efforts to make them agree to adopt the Cabinet Mission Scheme of division of powers between the Centre and the federating units. Uptil May, the idea went abegging despite a very tactful and statesmanlike handling by both of them of a meeting of the negotiating committee in Delhi. In retrospect, the persuasive, appealing and the somewhat flattering attitude adopted by the Congress leaders towards Princes in those days was in strange contrast to the minatory, peremptory sometimes even hostile attitude of which one finds so much expression in current times. In fact, both Sardar and Pandit Nehru went out of their way in conceding the monarchical form of Government in the States.

The imminence of Partition and the British Government's clear indication, that the treaty and paramountcy relationship between them would cease and that all arrangements, usages etc. that bound them in fiscal and other matters would terminate immediately lent great importance and urgency to the problem of future relationship between the future Indian Dominion and the States. Sardar, who always put before him the picture of a united India embracing both British India and the States, was deeply concerned over this issue. He had no illusions about the future of India without this unity and integration. In fact, he was one of the few in the

Congress organisation who had a clear idea of what this implied both in theory and in practice and how much depended on the solution of this problem, not only from the point of view of the peace and prosperity of the Indian Dominion but also from the point of view of the future relationship between India and Pakistan-to-be and its economic progress. He had also complete information as to the designs and intentions of the League leaders who were straining their ingenuity to see that the Princes remainder a perpetual problem for the future Indian Dominion and that as many of them as possible out of those who might associate themselves with the future Indian Dominion kept themselves aloof from such an association. To top it all there was the Political Department led by Sir Conrad Corfield It comprised a hierarchy of officials, practically all of them British who had dominated the Prines so far. It was chary of giving up that domination, was hostile to Indian aspirations and was believed to be inspring moves among the Princes to form unions of their own even at the cost of the unity and integrity of the country.

Sardar had been thinking hard about this problem and had set before himself the goal of seeking the accession of the States on three subjects, Defence, External Affairs and Communications even before the 3rd June Plan was out. He had been meeting and canvassing the leading Princes like the Maharaja of Patiala Baroda and Bikaner and leading Ministers of whom V.T. Krishnamachari was the most prominent and who in many respects shared the thoughts and ideas of Sardar notwithstanding certain differences of opinion. He was a repository of Sardar's confidence on issues to a large extent. Others who figured prominently in Sardar's list of consultations were K.N. Panikkar and Brojendra Lal Mitter who kept Sardar posted fully with the developments in Baroda.

In this sphere, as with many other political, constitutional and administrative issues, events marched quickly and Sardar found himself more than fully occupied with problems, the range, variety and magnitude of which can hardgy find a parallel in world history. On the political front it involved not only persuading the Working Committee which was a comparatively easy task but also the A.I.C.C. to accept the 3rd June Plan despite the fact that the Congress was a wedded emotionally as well as historically to a united India and that on many matters the contents of the Plan were at variance with Congress aims and ideology. Sardar knew that in this task he could rely on Gandhiji's support. Apart from the fact that both Pandit Nehru and Sardar had Gandhiji's complete confidence, Gandhiji had also full faith in them. He had been apprised of the radical change in the position during the last one year which had transformed the entire scene and for which policies and measures had to be devised but a core of discontent and dissatisfaction existed within the organisation and could, on the crest of a sentimental wave, create substantial trouble. As the Maulana's book *India wins Freedom* shows, there was no dearth of intrigues despite the combined leadership of Pandit Nehru and Sardar. The Maulana was not the only isolated figure who professed and believed something in public

but preached something quite different in private. Besides this problem, both the leaders and the Congress President had to contend with public reactions in the country and particularly in the N.W.F.P., Punjab, Bengal and Assam. It is true that there was a majority opinion of Hindu's and Sikh's in these areas which accepted Partition as inevitable. But nobody yet knew where the line of demarcation would be drawn and since trade, business, wealth and property of not only individuals but communities were involved, there was an inner conflict raging in the minds and hearts of these people. However, through speeches, statements, interviews and consultations, the two leaders supported by others kept up the morale of the people and succeeded in maintaining peace and stability in the country even during this troublesome period of transition, and in keeping party discipline and strength almost unimpaired. The Working Committee of the Congress accepted the 3rd June Plan in advance on 2 June itself. Jinnah got one of his occasional fits of formalism and whilst giving personal assurances to the Viceroy about the ultimate acceptance by the League of the 3rd June Plan, put off the formal acceptance until the Council of the All India Muslim League met. Gandhiji although opposed to Partition, did not resist it ; on the other hand at the A.I.C.C. he pleaded for the Working Committee.

The A.I.C.C. met in Delhi on 14 June and passed a resolution accepting the 3rd June Plan. The session was remarkable for the unity amongst the leaders on the acceptance of the Plan. Pandit Pant moved the resolution and Maulana Abul Kalan Azad supported it. Pandit Nehru and Sardar explained their point of view later after the placidity of the discussion had been somewhat disturbed by an impassioned and highly emotional speech made by Purshotam Dass Tandon against the Plan. Gandhiji supported the leaders and it was carried by a majority of 157 votes to 29 with 32 members remaining neutral, a figure so different from the Maulana's version as recorded in his book.

Apart from the momentousness of the session, the meeting of the A.I.C.C. deserves particular notice in view of the various charges made by Maulana Abul Kalan Azad against Pandit Nehru and Sardar in regard to the acceptance of the Plan. He mentions the opposition which he himself professed to Partition and his preference for the Cabinet Mission plan ; and that Gandhiji was ignored and the Plan did not have his support. One need not dilate here on the many shortcomings and defects of that record of impressions or on the many distortions of facts and picturisation of fancies in which it abounds or of the malice and bias against Sardar which it forcefully exhibits. On the other hand, it would pay us to assess Maulana Azad's version in the cold light of reason and facts which are crystal clear authentic and beyond dispute. According to Maulana Azad he firmly believed that the Cabihet Mission Plan of 16 May was the best solution to preserve the unity of the country ; even before the A.I.C.C. he expressed his preference for the 16th May plan. A study of the plan would, however, indicate that it did not rule out Partition but in fact

provided for a machinery to facilitate Partition, should certain groups decide in its favour. From the attitude of the Muslim League which had the support of the British Government, it was quite clear that such decisions would be made and that if it were left to events to take their shape or to the League to give shape to them, Assam and Bengal in the east and the Punjab, N.W.F.P. and Sind in the west would opt for a separate constitution by a narrow communal majority Muslim vote. Thus, the Cabinet Mission Plan not only could not have prevented Partition but in fact contained its germs. If enforced, it would have weakened the authority of the Centre at least in the crucial interim period by restricting it to Defence, External Affairs and Communications. The provinces, particularly those dominated by the League, would have acquired a power and strength which would have made them unamenable to Central policies and directions. The result can well be visualised if we have before us the picture of a weakened Centre torn between a determined, united and important minority group of provinces on one side and a divided, weakened and far-flung group, even though in a majority, on the other, with Indian States playing their own game in that state of confusion and chaos.

Apart from perpetrating this patently mistaken belief, Maulana Azad has attributed the conversion of Pandit Nehru and Sardar to the acceptance of Partition to the influence exercised by both Lord and Lady Mountbatten. This to my mind is the most unfair accusation and a false insinuation. Contrary to what Maulana believes, Lord Mountbatten did not go to Simla with a Partition plan which he succeeded in persuading Pandit Nehru to accept but he actually went to Simla for rest from his continuous exertions in the heat and dust of Delhi and had with him the plan of transfer of authority to the provinces or groups of provinces, if he could not achieve general acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan. It is also clear, not only from the study of facts given above but also from the statements of both the leaders that what converted them to the idea was their experience of the Coalition Government since October, 1946, the communal riots with their heavy toll of murders, loot and arson, the anarchy and chaos that was threatened by the Mountbatten Plan and the picture of deterioration that was fast taking place owing to the presence of a third party, most of whom were interested in creating trouble. It is also clear that the two leaders accepted Partition as a last resort after it was quite evident that the Hindus and Sikhs in the affected areas were reconciled to it. Wisdom, prudence, statesmanship and patriotism all clearly indicated that rather than go through the elaborate procedure of the Cabinet Mission Plan, it was in the interest of the country to accept in a straightforward manner, Partition itself. Maulana Azad himself indicated to the Viceroy that there was no time to wait and the choice had to be made at once. If that choice had not been made at the time it was, it would never have been possible to save those parts of the Punjab, Bengal and the greater part of Assam which today form part of the Indian Republic. Quite obviously Maulana Azad's memory plays false when he

describes the A.I.C.C. debate to show that Sardar spoke on the first day and that his and the Prime Minister's speech could not persuade the people to accept the resolution and therefore, Gandhiji had to participate in it. Actually Gandhiji spoke on the very first day and Sardar and Pandit Nehru on the next day and it was after their intervention that the resolution was passed, not by 29 votes for it and 5 against, but by the large majority already described. Both Pandit Nehru and Sardar pointed out that the acceptance of Partition did not constitute a surrender to the Muslim League, that the Congress had all along been against coercing any unit to remain in the Indian Union and that it was not out of fear that they had accepted Partition. Sardar made a forthright statement that if they had accepted and implemented the 16th May plan he could say, in the light of his experience of the interim Government, that the whole of India would have gone the Pakistan way instead of that, 75 to 85 per cent of India remained with them and its affairs could be regulated according to their own light and genius and the League could develop the areas that they had secured. The final blow to the theory of fear was given by Acharya Kripalani who indicated that if matters continued in the same vein 'we shall progressively reduce ourselves to a state of cannibalism and worse'.

With the approval of the A.I.C.C. to the 3rd June Plan, the formalities prescribed in it, the results of which were not at all in doubt, had to be gone through. Accordingly, in Bengal the Legislative Assembly met and decided by a majority in favour of joining a 'new Constituent Assembly', thereby in effect voting for Pakistan. Subsequently, the members from the non-Muslim majority areas of West Bengal accepted the partition of the province by a large majority and desired that their own area should join the Indian Constituent Assembly. The Punjab Legislative Assembly also met and decided by 91 votes to 77 to join a new Constituent Assembly. Thereupon, the members from the non-Muslim majority areas decided by 50 votes to 22 that the province should be partitioned and that their area should join the Indian Constituent Assembly. The Sind Assembly decided by 30 votes to 20 to join a new Constituent Assembly. Baluchistan followed suit. A referendum was held in Sylhet and there was a clear majority for joining Pakistan. The result of the referendum in which a little over 50 per cent of the electorate took part was overwhelmingly in favour of joining a new Constituent Assembly. Thus the pattern of future India and Pakistan became quite clear and it remained for the Boundary Commission under Lord Radcliffe to draw the line between the two Dominions.

A painful consequence of the 3rd June Plan was the parting of the ways between the Khan brothers and the leaders of the Congress, between whom throughout the freedom struggle a strong bond of affection and loyalty had been forged. The Khan brothers had every reason to feel bitter; they had stood foursquare and made great sacrifices in the cause of Indian unity which Congress itself had held so dear, and they were

certainly not unjustified in feeling that they had been let down. On the other hand, the leaders of the Congress had only a kind of Hobson's choice in this matter: holding out for provincial independence in the case of the North West Frontier Province would have jeopardised their entire stand in the rest of India. The Khan brothers certainly realised this; and probably, to add to their frustration, was the feeling that it was only a matter of time before the communal fanaticism of Pakistan would submerge their own Province, for all their lifelong struggle to avert this. It was all very sad. In the event a referendum was held in the North West Frontier Province which was boycotted by the ruling party on the ground that a choice should be given in favour of independence also.

In the meantime, the Indian Independence Bill had been passed by both Houses of the British Parliament. The Bill was seen in draft by the Congress and League Leaders and approved by them. The debates in the two Houses of Parliament in London were marked by friendliness and goodwill towards the two Dominions that would come into being after it became an Act and was implemented. It was also unique in that perhaps no Viceroy secured such unstinted and unanimous praise for his achievements as Lord Mountbatten did in both the Houses.

The provisions of the Bill were explained by Lord Mountbatten at a press conference over which Sardar presided. At that conference Sardar stated that the freedom of India on 15 August 1947 would be the greatest achievement of India and was one of the greatest acts in the history by any power. He also made it clear that the jurisdiction of the British Parliament over India ended on the passage of the Bill and that the two Dominions would be fully sovereign within their respective areas. It is a tribute to the friendliness and cordiality in which this last act of the British Parliament was performed that not only did Lord Mountbatten agree to serve as the Governor-General of the Indian Dominion but that Sir John Colville and Sir Archibald Nye continued as Governors of Bombay and Madras. The three service chiefs were also British.

In the meantime, on the Indian States front, Sardar had been very active holding consultations with many Princes and their Ministers with a view to turning their attention towards accession on the three subjects and shepherding all the States that mattered into the fold of the future Indian Dominion. The way for these consultations had been cleared by the exit from the chamber of Princes of the Nawab of Bhopal who, before April, had done his best to keep the Indian States out of the Constituent Assembly and failed. On 28th April 1947, the representatives of the States of Baroda, Bikaner, Cochin, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Patiala and Rewa had taken their seats in the Constituent Assembly and representatives from other States followed suit one after the other. In the meantime, the idea of smaller States forming groups had already borne fruit. A union of Kathiawad States was being talked of and a draft scheme for the union of Rulers of Central India States was in the making. A

scheme for the Punjab Hill States Union had also been drawn up. The Rulers of Deccan States had agreed to form a Union and those of Rajputana States and the Eastern States were also actively considering a scheme of union

On these developments, Pandit Nehru had expressed himself not opposed to the idea of their grouping themselves into a union but felt that the first step was for every ruler to grant responsible government to his State. He also preferred that the States which could not form a viable economic union should be absorbed into the neighbouring provinces and not into a union. Simultaneously with these developments, the Political Department began to prepare for its own dissolution. It had decided in this process to ensure that the States stood on their own feet and held themselves together though in full cooperation with British India, that the Political Agents should be withdrawn by the end of 1947 and the main duty of the Political Department should be wound up by the end of March 1948 The Crown representatives Police Force which was the Special Police maintained by the Political Department out of Indian revenues was to be handed over to the various States. Earlier, in July 1947, a decision was taken to constitute the Dangs, a collection of petty hill States on the border of Nasik and Surat districts into an independent unit Sardar came to know of it and mentioned his concern and opposition to the Viceroy who asked Sir Conrad Corfield to discuss it with him. Sir Conrad Corfield could hardly be expected to fall in line with Sardar's wishes and pleaded that the interests of the Dangs would be drowned in the deliberations, discussions and budgets of the Province of Bombay in the event of merger. Sardar, who sometimes came with amazingly quick but disarming retorts to such outbursts, told Sir Conrad Corfield that in that event he would give a guarantee that the Dangs would not be absorbed into either of the two districts and that their budget and development would be a separate concern of the Government of Bombay. To this, Sir Conrad Corfield had no answer and Sardar's victory on the Dangs issue was the first nail that he drove into the coffin of the Political Department.

After the 3rd June announcement, and in fact the same evening, Lord Mountbatten convened a meeting of the States Negotiating Committee and explained to them the implications of the new Plan, It is strange that even in the approaching sunset of the British Empire in India a strong and liberal personality like Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer pleaded for paramountcy to be loosened or allowed to lapse in advance of the transfer of powers, to enable the States to negotiate on equal terms with the Governments of the two Dominions, thereby hinting that some States were not likely to join either of them. At this conference, Lord Mountbatten indicated that paramountcy would lapse on the transfer of powers. Lord Mountbatten also stated that interim arrangements on a stand still basis were bound to be required for the period between the lapse of paramountcy and the conclusion of fresh agreements.

Lord Mountbatten also confirmed that the entry of the States into the Constituent Assembly of either Dominion was a matter of free choice. He also suggested that two negotiating committees might be set up by the States to negotiate with the two Constituent Assemblies provided the interim Government agreed to such a proposal. He also assured the Princes that his personal advice would be available to any of them who came and asked for it.

Events moved swiftly following this conference. The Nawab of Bhopal resigned the Chancellorship of the Chamber of Princes and was succeeded by the Maharaja of Patiala. The Chamber of Princes became virtually defunct and the States were devoid of any single institution in which they could meet and discuss matters of common concern. The Political Department launched itself upon a planned destruction of all records, winding up of Residencies and the transfer of Cantonment areas and Crown forces to the various States. After about a week, Pandit Nehru raised this issue at a meeting of the party leaders called by Lord Mountbatten in which there was a clear clash of opinion between Pandit Nehru on one side and Sir Conrad Corfield and Mr. Jinnah on the other. Both the latter hold the view that after the lapse of paramountcy, the States could become independent. At this meeting while Lord Mountbatten and Sir Conrad Corfield felt that instead of the Dominion Governments setting up an organisation of representatives in each State or group of States, the States should be encouraged to appoint representatives at the headquarters of the successor Governments. Pandit Nehru contested this view and suggested that the new Dominions could have the system of the Political Department and Residents. He maintained that the choice of machinery lay with the Government of India and that it was open to such Government to deal drastically with a State that took up a line of opposition to the policy of the Central Oovernment. Thereupon, Lord Mountbatten suggested that a State Department rather than a Political Department should be set up forthwith and be divided into two sections in advance of the partition of the country. The conference was also given a draft formula for a standstill arrangement, detailed discussions on which were postponed but it was agreed that joint discussions with the representatives of the States would be held on these arrangements. On the destruction of records, it was agreed that the Residents could destroy the records and documents of temporary importance, that records which contained information about the private lives of the Rulers and the internal affairs of the States should be handed over to the U.K. High Commissioner and that the other records should be weeded out or sorted out in consultations with experts of the Department of Education.

In the meantime, Travancore had already declared its attention to set up an independent sovereign State. This was followed by a similar announcement on behalf of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Dewan of Travancore announced his intention to appoint a trade agent in Pakistan. These events emphasised the need of urgent action and at the very next

meeting of the political leaders, it was agreed that a States Department should be formed with two Ministers, one from the Congress and the other from the League and with two Secretaries in charge. Pandit Nehru nominated Sardar on behalf of the Congress as the Minister in charge of the States Deparment and Jinnah on his part nominated Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar.

The appointment of the Secretary of the States Department was then taken up by Sardar. He had already formed a very high opinion of V.P. Menon and he felt that in order to deal with the problem of the States as well as other problems it would be helpful to have V.P. Menon as his Secretary. The latter had done yeoman's service as Reforms Commissioner, had formed a valuable link between Sardar and the Viceroy on many matters of importance and had the intelligence, foresight and skill to deal with the crucial problem of integration of States on which Sardar had set his heart, The manner in which he had helped him to deal with the constitutional problems had created a spirit of mutual trust and confidence and the band of workers which he had in the Reforms Department could, he thought constitute a very fine nucleus of the States Department of the future. Pandit Nehru had, however, other ideas on this subject and he thought that H.V.R Iengar who was Secretary of the Constituent Assembly would make an admirable choice. However, the final word rested with Sardar and he had his way. On 5 July, the new Department was inaugurated and V.P. Menon assumed charge of the office of Secretary to the new Department in addition to his duties as Secretary to the Governor-General.

In his book *The Story of Integration of the Indian States*, V.P. Menon has given an account of his many discussions with Sardar on the problem of the Indian States and the manner in which he and Sardar agreed on the various issues and policies that were to confront the Department of States. Sardar's mind on these problems had, however, already been formed. Only a year before on 8 June 1946, addressing the General Council of the All India States People's Conference, he had said: 'The Princes were realising the change that was coming ... in a free India. I am sure Princes would be guided by a real spirit of patriotism and love of their subjects. But that change would come only if India were free and the British quit India.' (How prophetic these words were, subsequent events would show). Paying a tribute to some patriotic Rulers he had said; 'Today there are many Rulers who wish every success to the Congress in its struggle for the achievement of complete Independence.' It was in this spirit that throughout the month of June he endeavoured to bring the States into an agreement over the issue of their future relationship with the Indian Dominion. The most significant step that he took in this connection was the one that would stamp him for all time as a statesman above the common run of that tribe and as a politician whose shrewdness and judgement were of an exceptional nature. Sardar had, no doubt, realised by this time the weight and influence which the Maharaja of

Bikaner and Maharaja of Patiala and Ministers like Sir V.T. Krishnamachari exercised in the counsels of Indian Princes but the knew that the key to the minds of most of the Princes was held by the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. This appraisement is not surprising considering that out of the 562 Indian States, by far the largest number was situated in Kathiawar. Apart from this, the Jam Saheb who was looked upon as a leader or 'uncle' by many of the bigger rulers held a unique personal position in the ranks of the Princes. Sardar made up his mind to tackle him but years of aloofness and even antipathy stood between them. There was a belief in Congress circles that Jam Saheb was not without blame for the conspiracy that had been hatched againat Sardar when he was in Rajkot many years earlier. We had miraculously escaped a murderous attempt on his life by changing his route. In every issue that affected Kathiawar States, the Congress, be it Gandhiji or Sardar or anybody else, saw the unmistakable hand of Jam Saheb. Even latterly it was generally believed that the Jam Saheb was holding discussions with certain elements who had disruptive designs in regard to the future of India and his stay away from Delhi at the time particularly led to a misunderstanding of his intentions. It was in this situation that Sardar one day decided to talk things over with his brother, Major General Himatsinhji who was at that time in Delhi. Himatsinhji had patriotic instincts and admired Sardar and consequently was more frank with him than would normally be expected. He told Sardar that the major influence on Jam Saheb was his Maharani and that if he could bring her round, the Jam Saheb could be taken for granted. Sardar felt, however, that both should be tackled at that same time.

Forgetting the past and with a brilliant genius for tactics and strategy he conveyed to Jam Saheb through Himatsinhji an invitation to lunch in Delhi. I remember the day when this was arranged. Himatsinhji was somewhat hesitant and diffident but at the same time he had hope; he conveyed Sardar's message to the Jam Saheb at Kotah and put in his own pleas for its acceptance. Jam Saheb finally accepted the invitation and flew with the Maharani in his own plane to Delhi. Himatsinhji met them at the airport and brought them to lunch at 1, Aurangzeb Road in the middle of a very hot day. The very first meeting was a cordial one and Sardar received them at the steps of his house. Sardar welcomed them with one of his rare winning smiles and exhibited a warmth of regard and cordiality that only he could muster as the occasion demanded. He led them into the drawing room where he held some preliminary discussions. This was followed by lunch. The three of them surveyed the situation in a spirit of patriotism and in a statesmanlike manner. Sardar brought to the fore all his winning ways to make an impression on the two and the effect seems to have been both electric and magical. The three of them pledged themselves to mutual help and cooperation and brotherly affection and regard and thenceforward there was never any reserve between Their Highnesses and Sardar as long as he lived. The Jam Saheb promised his help to bring the princes round into an attitude of

cooperation and understanding and never resiled from the word that he gave to Sardar that day. Whether it was in the negotiations leading to the accession of the States or whether it was in the further discussions with individual States in the formation of unions and complete integration, the Jam Saheb stood by the Sardar and gave unstinted support and cooperation to V.P. Menon in many a detailed negotiation. In fact, even his aircraft came in handy for the many journeys which Menon and his team had to perform in the course of the elaborate negotiations leading to the formation of various unions and to arrangements with individual Rulers and States. As the Jam Saheb and his wife left 1, Auranzeb Road full of regard and respect for Sardar the bond of affection and friendship between them was sealed in perpetuity. I became convinced as also Himatsinhji that the day's good deed was done. We had both helped in our own humble way in the cementing of a bond that was to prove so formative and decisive in India's relations with the States. For Sardar to have forgotten and forgiven was not easy, though by now I had come to regard it as commonplace that whenever the interest of the country demanded he could forget and forgive. But what surprised me was the manner in which in an hour or so the past was but a memory and the future held promises of fruitful reality.

Things were thus already on the move towards a new orientation of the policy of the Indian wing of Government towards the Indian States. The negotiations were not within the ambit of the Constituent Assembly procedure. The ground was being slowly but surely prepared in mutual consultations between those who mattered. The process of change from the old to the new regime was now on and events were talking their course in the set direction of transfer of power and Partition. Even in spheres other than constitutional the position of the Indian States could not have been free from these changes. The Indian States and British India were so closely linked that with the departure of the British who kept them apart and yet maintained some links, interim administrative and other arrangements to meet the situation were inevitable. The suddenness of the shift in the position had, however, a twin effect on the minds of the Princes. On the one hand there was confusion and uncertainty but on the other there was a sense of shock which under the need for urgency made their minds turn to an unorthodox and quick adaptation in their relations with the new Governments that were going to come into being only a few weeks later. The sands of time were running out and as 15 August approached nearer and nearer the sense of urgency deepened and the tempo of action increased.

Seven

Beginnings of Integration

THE NEW States Department was brought into being on 5 July. It was inevitable that an event of such far-reaching significance constituting a revolutionary departure from the past should be heralded by a policy statement from Sardar. It was agreed between him and V.P. Menon that a statement should be issued, making out a case for the new association between the Department and the Princes based on a spirit of mutual trust and understanding and on mutual interests, indicating Government's intention and policy to secure the accession of States on three subjects and inviting the States to help Sardar to achieve this. A draft of the statement which, as happens on such occasions, was the work of more than one brain, was submitted to Sardar by Menon on the day previous. Sardar went through the draft and marked it at many places for modifications and amendments and called me for instructions to draft them. He also indicated to me the lines on which certain additions had to be made. The changes that he indicated were either intended to give a personal touch to the statement or to emphasise the lessons of history or to underline the need for mutual trust and understanding or to bring out the paramountcy of national interests and considerations or to introduce the political aspects of Congress policy. A good deal of the last para which is reproduced below bears the unmistakable evidence of Sardar's touch:

> We are at a momentous stage in the history of India. By common endeavour we can raise the country to a new greatness while lack of unity will expose us to fresh calamities. I hope the Indian States will bear in mind that the alternative to cooperation in the general interest is anarchy and chaos which will overwhelm great and small in a common ruin if we are unable to act together in the minimum of common task. Let not the future generations curse us for having had the opportunity but failed to turn it to our mutual advantage. Instead, let it be our proud privilege to leave a legacy of mutually beneficial relationship which would raise the Sacred Land to its proper place amongst the nations of the world and turn it into an abode of peace and prosperity.

The statement was well received both by the press and the public in

India and made a great impression on the Rulers. Couched in conciliatory and persuasive tone, giving expression to lofty thoughts, sentiments and ideals and promising action not on the basis of domination of one over the other but on that of 'our mutual interests and welfare', it created confidence among the Rulers that they had a place in the Indian polity which was their due. They could expect from the new Government an approach to their problem not on the basis of any paramountcy of the Indian Dominion but on the basis of the 'paramountcy of popular interests and welfare'. The Statement of 5 July found its way surely into the hearts of many Rulers but a few, like Bhopal and Travancore were unmoved and those who were content to follow their behest held themselves aloof.

With the formation of the States Department which consisted of V.P. Menon at the top as Secretary and C.C. Desai as Additional Secretary, events began to move even more quickly on the States' fronts than they did at any time earlier. In order to exploit fully the changed atmosphere created by his statement of 5 July, Sardar convened a meeting of leading Rulers and their Ministers at his residence within a few days and appealed to them for their support in the move for accession on three subjects. The response was satisfactory and it was felt that both he and V.P. Menon could then launched upon informal discussions with the Rulers and their advisers to be followed by a full-fledged conference of Rulers on accession and certain other matters concerning the functioning of the States Department.

In the meantime, the machinery for Partition was working at top speed under the directions of Sardar on the Indian side. The immensity of the task before them, the magnitude of the problems, the embarrassments and complications which the solution of those problems involved and the wide compass which their range covered would easily have taken months and even a few years without incurring the charge of slowness of speed. Under the impact of the set time factor it was interesting to see how human ingenuity and resourcefulness could rise to the occasion and reduce the time to a fraction of what it would have otherwise taken. For the first time perhaps in the annals of the Government of India, each day was marked by rapid progress. The daily account sheet which H.M. Patel on one side and Mohammad Ali on the other rendered to their respective leaders, Sardar and Jinnah, constituted a running record of many things done but there was no proverbial night's rest. Sardar's homework on these issues appeared to be unending.

The range of the problems can be judged from the fact that he was called upon to decide not only what the travel procedures between the Dominions were going to be but also on what basis stores, as for example, of the Posts and Telegraph Department or of the Public Works Department were to be distributed and how the assets of the armed forces in Cantonments and in aeroplanes, naval ships, military equipment and Q.M.G. stores were to be divided. Even the comparative efficiency of

naval vessels, for instance, had to be gone into in consultation with the officers of the Navy and Sardar had ultimately to decide whether we should insist on the particular vessel or the other and whether we should let go a particular type of gun or cannon or whether we should make an issue over such questions. Broadly speaking, a general measure of unanimity could be reached between the two sides on most issues but those concerning military stores, Posts and Telegraphs and assets and liabilities gave rise to several difficulties. Ultimately even these were resolved without matters having to go to arbitration. Division of the Services was based on individual option, subject to the right of each Government to refuse to accept an officer even though he had opted for service under it. The division of the army raised the problem of whether it should be on communal or territorial lines. Ultimately it was received by basing it on citizenship which for the time being virtually meant territorial considerations subject to the condition that the members of the armed forces belonging to a minority community would have the option of transferring their homes and citizenship to India or Pakistan as the case may be according to their choice.

This break-up of India's armed forces into two was to be accomplished by 15 August. This huge, complicated and controversial task was taken up by Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Commander-in-Chief, who after Independence became the Supreme Commander, and worked under the direction of the Joint Defence Council of India and Pakistan of which Lord Mountbatten was Chairman and the Defence Ministers of India and Pakistan and the Supreme Commander were members. It is a tribute to Lord Mountbatten that even Jinnah accepted him as the independent Chairman of the Joint Defence Council notwithstanding his being the Governor-General of India.

The Joint Defence Council continued to deal with the problems of division of the armed forces for about six mohths even after Independence but the post of the Supreme Commander was abolished after 30 November, 1947. The abolition of this office was due entirely to Sardar who was receiving information of what was being done surreptitiously, by design and manoeuvres on the part of certain persons without the Supreme Commander being able to control their activities, which were prejudicial to the Defence of India. Pakistan was naturally opposed to Sir Claude, Auchinleck's departure and Lord Mountbatten also defended Sir Claude, Sardar, however, was adamant and insisted on the winding up of Supreme Command on the ground that its presence was not permitting the Indian Army to function with full efficiency and in view of the fact that Sir Claude Auchinleck's staff, many of whom were sympathetic to Pakistan, was in contact with Pakistan military officers. Ultimately, Lord Mountbatten realised the impossibility of continuing the Supreme Command and after he failed to wear down Pakistan's resistance to the proposal of the liquidation of the Supreme Command, the matter was referred to the British Government who solved the tangle by closing down the Supreme

Command Headquarters on 30 November, 1947.

The Supreme Commander, however, before liquidation rendered one signal service to the two Dominions by assisting in the countermanding of Jinnah's orders for Pakistan's troops to march into Kashmir. This would have brought both countries into open military conflict, the consequences of which for either would have been disastrous. The British forces in India were also being gradually withdrawn by the time the Supreme Command was liquidated. Most of them had left but the last contingent could leave only by 28 February, 1948.

The liquidation of the Supreme Command and the division of Services between India and Pakistan were facilitated by the British, Government's decision on the thorny question of compensation to the Civil and Defence Services of the Secretary of State. We have seen earlier how Sardar had taken a very determined and logical attitude on this question and how even Arthur Henderson had failed to achieve any success in dislodging him. We have also seen earlier that Lord Mountbatten had succeeded in securing a modification of the stand of His Majesty's Government on the question of compensation and an assurance from the Government of India that Indian members of the Secretary of State's Services should continue to serve the Indian Government on their existing scales of pay, leave, pension rights, etc. The Government of India accepted the liability for compensation only for those Indian officers whom they decided not to employ or who apprehended, to the satisfaction of the Governor-General, that their prospects would suffer owing to their conduct in the pre-Independence period or who could satisfy the Governor-General that their future in the province in which they were serving could not be assured and no suitable transfer could be arranged. The Government of India also accepted the liability for the payment of retiring or proportionate pensions in respect of officers whether British or otherwise who would leave on 15 August. Since the British Government accepted the liability for compensation to these officers, the result was that almost all the European officers on the civil side left India on taking compensation. The Government of India exercised its option to terminate the services of a handful of other officers to whom it agreed to grant compensation. Many more European officers agreed to serve Pakistan. In the Defence forces also while the numerial disparity between those who agreed to serve India and those who agreed to serve Pakistan remained, many more European officers agreed to serve India than was the case on the civil side. The Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Forces was still a European officer and during the crucial stage of conflict in Kashmir and in Hyderabad, the Indian Army, Air Force and Navy were under the command of a British Commander-in-Chief.

The most controversial matter involving delicate decisions and the fate of millions as against that of some thousands involved under the division of civil personnel and armed forces was that of drawing up of the boundaries of the two Dominions. Broadly speaking, the boundaries of India and Pakistan were known but owing to the partition of Bengal, the

separation of Sylhet from Assam and the partition of the Punjab, detailed boundaries had to be drawn up on the basis of communal majorities and other factors. Two Commissions were accordingly set up, one for Bengal and Sylhet and the other for the Punjab consisting of a Chairman and four members, two of whom were to be nominated by the Congress and the Muslim League respectively. By common consent Sir Cyril (later, Lord) Radcliffe was appointed the Chairman of both Commissions. The representatives of India and Pakistan were selected Judges from the High Courts of Calcutta and Punjab.

On an issue like this there was bound to be differences in approach, in outlook, in presentation and in facts and figures. Rival claims of the two communities were based on a consideration of communal majorities as well as other factors which, according to the terms of reference, the Boundary Commission could have taken into account. It was inevitable that the weight of other factors would lead to contrary results in the two cases and what was sauce for the Bengal goose might not be sauce for the Punjab gander and vice versa. Calcutta, Lahore, Multan, Jullunder, Montgomery and Lyallpur districts, Chittagong, Burdwan, Khulna, Tripura, and Cooch Behar were the principal bones of contention. In the circumstances, to expect unanimity among the learned Judges who constituted the membership of the Commission would have been unrealistic. The maze of contradictory facts, opinion and arguments were such as would have taxed the patience and resources of any human agency. No Judge on either side, even if convinced of the opposite case, could have signed for it in violation of the sentiments of his own side. Consequently, even though objectively the case for certain areas coming to one side or the other could have been sustained on judicial standards, no member on either side dared face the risks involved. In the circumstances, it was left to Sir Cyril Radcliffe to give his own award. Sir Cyril actually gave it on 13 August but owing to the intervention of the Independence Day and the preceding and subsequent preoccupations, the Radcliffe Award was released on 17 August.

The division of boundaries was clearly on communal lines and other factors were largely ignored except in some stray cases. Thus a major part of Khulna district, and not the district as a whole, which would have been ordinarily the case went over to Pakistan. Similarly, only a part of the Nadia district, instead of the whole, came over to India. The Chittagong hill tracts which were predominantly tribal and Buddhist but not Muslim went over to Pakistan, much to the grief of the local population. The Muslims felt the loss of Calcutta and Murshidabad. On the Punjab side, certain *tehsils* of Gurdaspur and Lahore districts were handed over to India and the control over three of the famous rivers of the Punjab, namely Beas, Sutlej and Ravi passed to East Punjab, whilst Lahore, Lyallpur and Montgomery were lost to India. The Muslims also bitterly resented the retention of the Mandi hydro-electric project by East Punjab. In terms of population and area 36 per cent of the area and 35 per cent of

the population of united Bengal came to India. Only 16 per cent of the Muslim population remained in West Bengal whereas 42 per cent of non-Muslims remained in East Bengal. Similarly, about 38 per cent of the area and 45 per cent of the total population of united Punjab came to India and a substantial percentage of Hindu and Sikh population still remained in West Punjab. The Sikh community lost heavily both in population and in property and even its religious places were split into two. Similarly, the Muslim population of the districts that were to remain in India and of western U.P., which had strongly supported the League, began to feel disturbed and uneasy. This and the fate of the Hindu and Sikh population in West Punjab held out ominous portents for the immediate future. Similarly in East Bengal, the comparatively large proportion of the Hindu population left there, was bound to remain a perpetual threat to the relationship of the two Dominions in view of the militant attitude of the Muslim majority. This gave rise to a periodic controversy and posed a problem of serious dimensions to the Government of India and in particular to the Government of West Bengal. More than all this was the bitterness of Pakistan over the loss of Gurdaspur which gave India access to Kashmir and cheated Pakistan of the opportunity of encircling that State which had a Hindu Ruler but a Muslim majority population.

The Radcliffe Award, once its contents were known, became a subject of a acute controversy. Earlier, when speculation was rife about the contents of the Award and it was rumoured that Gurdaspur had been given to Pakistan and certain other parts of what is India today had been similarly lost to India, Sardar felt very disturbed and uneasy. He told V.P. Menon of his determination to challenge the Award to the bitter end if he felt that India had been unjustly deprived of access to Jammu and Kashmir or if large chunks of areas inhabited by Hindus in Bengal or Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab, were to be given over to Pakistan in violation of the letter and spirit of the terms of reference of the Commission. Fortunately, some of the apprehensions that he entertained on the basis of speculations and rumours proved incorrect. Whilst he was still sore over the other features of the Award which were not to India's satisfaction and was distressed that Sir Cyril Radcliffe had not given due weight to the other factors which had been specifically mentioned at Sardar's instance in the terms of reference, he reconciled himself to the new boundaries in the hope that Jinnah would stand by his assurance of giving the minorities a fair deal in Pakistan.

Though Sardar was not altogether sure of Jinnah being able to fulfil that hope, he expressed his belief that the partition would be as between two brothers and that after Partition each one of the two States would be able to guarantee security and peace within its borders. Thus he awaited 15 August with hope, expectation and faith.

Sardar worked relentlessly and with determination to bring about a peaceful transfer of power on that day. Nobody, who saw him holding

endless discussions relating to Partition, in addition to the normal responsibilities of his official and political assignments, or handling dexterously and prudently the delicate negotiations with the Princes and tackling skilfully the many problems of liquidation of the British regime in India as well as maintaining the peace and security of the country during the very difficult period of transition could help but admire the organising ability, broad vision, the statesmanship, the grit and determination, the equal facility with which he could deal with broad matters of policy and important points of detail, the quickness of his grasp and swiftness of judgement. Those were the days in which, unlike in his later years, he had both the strength and the energy of a man, two or three decades younger than himself. Even on the hill slopes of Mussoorie he could walk sixteen miles a day at a speed which would have done credit to a much younger man. He used to handle during those days many things which he later left to his trusted advisers and subordinates. The success which he secured in safeguarding India's interests and in solving many delicate and intricate problems and the grasp and mastery that he acquired over the broad policies and details of the departments of the Government of India should have been an eye-opener to many who with much more experience of departmental affairs were yet unable to make that mark or impression on the course of Government policies or measures. It was an object lesson to all of us that, a person such as he who had led a full life and could reasonably have afforded to take things easy, was yet fired with the enthusiasm of a patriot and nation-builder who was determined to devote the remaining years of his life in the cause of serving his country.

In certain quarters Lord Mountbatten has been criticised for holding up the announcement of the Boundary Award by four days and thereby accentuating the feeling of bitterness and disillusionment on both sides of the dividing line. Campbell Johnson in his reminiscences of those days described the circumstances in which the announcement of the Award had to be postponed. There were valid and weighty reasons which should normally convince anyone with a sense of objectivity. Apart from that, however, the critics ignore the fact that even before the Award was announced, explosions had started on the Pakistan side of the border and distressing accounts of what was going on above and below the surface, had been received from that troublesome area only a week before the day of Independence. In those circumstances, to release an Award which would have caused resentment and bitterness amongst millions of people on both sides of the border on any day for which the entire population on both sides had waited for decades would not only have multiplied those explosions several fold but would also have provoked scenes of violence and hostility. Apart from this, with the preoccupations of the political leaders on 14 and 15, the only day on which the fateful document could have been released was 16 August, and it would therefore, be wrong to suggest that there was an avoidable delay, whether deliberate or otherwise, in releasing it. In any case, anticipatory action to deal with the

trouble on both sides had already been taken by the constitution of the boundary force of Majore General Rees of World War II fame. The setting up of this force had been decided upon about three weeks earlier and it had a strength of about fifty thousand men led by British, Hindu Sikh and Muslim officers. That subsequently it failed to achieve its purpose and finally had to be wound up was not due to any fault of its composition or deficiency in numbers but to the overwhelming circumstances and confusion of the situation on both sides.

The general upheaval that overtook large areas of the two Punjabs and even western U.P. and some parts of Rajasthan and the *Jat* area of Alwar and Bharatpur could virtually be likened to the sea being on fire. In the situation that prevailed, for any boundary force to have used force with that ruthlessness which was required was impossible. Action in such circumstances has not only to be adequate but swift so that the fire is controlled quickly. In the absence of either boldness or swiftness of action not only did the force incur the odium of ineffectiveness but it also gave rise to doubts and suspicions which are always fatal to the use of force at a time of crisis. Moreover, with the roving bands of marauders of both sides adopting guerilla tactics of which we ourselves saw the first signs when we visited the *Jat-Meo* area in May, it became virtually impossible to acquire control over the situation without that freedom of operation which normally would be given in such circumstances to a task force under unified leadership and functioning under one Government. Where every household had been converted into a cradle of disorder and lawlessness the task would have taxed the resources of a much larger force even under most favourable conditions; but when the force was itself functioning under conflicts of Governments and of community, creed and races, it was inevitable that should be beset by the severest of handicaps which seriously detracted from its efficiency and effectiveness.

Whilst these important and detailed measures of preparation for the day were being undertaken, significant changes had already been made in the functioning of the Interim Government. Throughout, the Congress never relaxed in its attempts to secure assurance from the Muslim League members of the Government for the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission long-term plan. The fateful omission of Lord Wavell to secure a written undertaking to this effect from Jinnah and the submission of the Congress to that omission at the time despite Sardar's insistence had already made a very significant and far-reaching change in the situation. Even the British Government had failed to help, no doubt somewhat handicapped by the Congress refusal to accept the Cabinet Mission's interpretation of the grouping formula. The real point was however that the League members once brought into Government could not be dismissed without causing grave repercussions on the political situation and atmosphere. In addition, the Congress had to reckon with the sympathy that the British officialdom had for the League; the Congress could not also force the issue by resigning and getting out of the Government themselves,

To do so would have meant leaving the Government entirely in the hands of the Leaguers and eventually creating a situation of anarchy and chaos in which the entire country's administration would have gone to rack and ruin. Moreover, it was impossible to scuttle the ship of Indian Government at a time when Independence did not seen far off. It was for this variety of reasons that, notwithstanding uneasiness, conflict and open hostility between the two wings of Government and the baneful effect of this state of affairs, both the Congress and the League representatives continued to function in a Government which was divided against itself.

In any case, after the declaration of transfer of power on the basis of Partition and Dominion status was made, the previous justification for asking the League to quit the Government disappeared. It was no longer the Cabinet Mission Plan that was now in operation; on the other hand it was an altogether new plan which was not based on either of the parties getting out of Government if it did not accept it. On the other hand, the plan itself envisaged a little over two months for the division of the country and the functioning of the two Governments to the mutual exclusion of their jurisdictions Whilst for about a month, a semblance of Government functioning as a whole was maintained, it had become clear very soon that the Government would have to function in two compartments. This change was foreshadowed in the bifurcation of the States Department which had already been decided upon towards the end of June and was brought about in the beginning of July. The reluctance of Jinnah to commit the League as such to the plan and his insistence on the dilatory procedure of observance of formalities before he could commit the League to it made Lord Mountbatten's task of keeping the League Members in Government even more difficult. In fact, it was during these days that Sardar hurled at him the famous diatribe that 'you will not govern yourself and would not let us govern'. Lord Mountbatten, however, played for time and time seemed to favour him too but when just a month was left for the momentous day of Independence he had to resort to the expedient of splitting his Government into two and making it function in regard to its affairs roughly on the territorial basis of the future Dominions of India and Pakistan. Only matters of common concern were to be administered jointly by both wings under the Chairmanship of the Governor-General. This division was to find its counter-part in the secretariat and the departments of Governments so that virtually from about the third week of July the two Governments of India and Pakistan were functioning in the Capital city of the future Dominion of India. The most significant change in the existing set-up, however, was that the Governor-General in his relations with the two wings agreed to adopt a constitutional role.

The problem of the Interim Government having now been solved for the few weeks that remained for it to function, Sardar found himself engaged in the much more stupendous task of dealing with the problem of the Indian States before 15 August 1947. Sardar and V.P. Menon had already canvassed individually many of the Indian Princes that mattered.

Sardar had also called earlier a meeting of important Rulers and their Ministers at his house. Much feverish activity to persuade the Rulers to accept accession on three subjects and enter into standstill arrangements by the time the British regime ended were going on behind the scenes. The problem of dealing with the Rulers collectively, however, appeared to be a formidable one, the delicacy of the task being heightened by the presence of disruptive elements among the Princes who were inspired either by the League leaders themselves or some of their own brother princes who were out and out League sympathisers. Jinnah went to the length of making a public announcement that he would guarantee the independence of the States in Pakistan. At the meeting of the Princes which Sardar had convened, after a satisfactory discussion on the functioning of the new Department and clearance of many misunderstandings, it was agreed that a conference of the Rulers would be held on 25 July at which matters of accession, standstill agreement and other issues concerning the functioning of the States Department would be discussed. But the question as to how this should be done in the face of doubts and uncertainties harboured by the Princes and the manoeuvres and machinations of those who were out to sabotage this development caused deep mental anguish to Sardar. Finally he decided that if he himself took a leading part in the meeting, it might lead to open, contrary or hostile acts by the League leaders. He also felt, reassured as he was by Shri Menon's report of his discussion with Lord Mountbatten, that Lord Mountbatten would be able to lend his help effectively in bringing about the desired results. Sardar, therefore, secured Cabinet approval for Lord Mountbatten to deal with this question in his capacity as the Crown Representative. In the meantime, a draft Instrument of Accession and a revised draft of the standstill agreement prepared by the Political Department had already been evolved.

On the day preceding the conference Sardar and Menon met a delegation of Rulers and the States Ministers, where virtually an agreement was reached on these two thorny questions. The next day, amid scenes of pomp and pageantry the conference of Rulers and representatives of States was held in the Chamber of Princes and Lord Mountbatten in a very persuasive and appealing speech advised the Rulers to accede to their appropriate dominion on the subjects of Defence, External Affairs and Communications. He made it plain that under compulsion of geography a vast majority of the States were linked with the Dominion of India and if they were prepared to come, it was much better their coming in before 15 August than afterwards. He announced the personnel of the negotiating committee who would consider the items on the agenda in detail and then clarified a number of points raised by the Rulers and the Ministers. This was the last princely conference of the old type reminiscent of the old regime. The atmosphere was a combination of majesty and splendour, informality and cordiality. To this was added a compelling sense of urgency. In the midst of the divided counsels that prevailed it seemed quite clear that most of the princes would play for safety and

consequently follow the path of least resistance. After the conference was over, the matters were remitted to the closed door discussions of the negotiating committee which, during the following week sorted out the problems and succeeded in enlisting the support of most of the Princes. Behind the scenes there was no doubt that Lord Mountbatten was exercising his influence in a remarkable manner in favour of accession for he was convinced that the Princes had no choice in their own interests but to accede.

Following these discussions which lasted for some days, Lord and Lady Mountbatten gave a reception to the Ruling Princes and representatives of States at the Viceroy's House to which all of us were invited and which in part was converted into a field of negotiations. The scene at the reception can best be described in the words of Campbell Johnson himself and the manner in which Lord Mountbatten threw himself with characteristic zest, energy and ability into the task of shepherding the Princes into the accession lobby can hardly be better illustrated than by some of the incidents that he had described:

> There was a colourful reception at Viceroy's House tonight in honour of over fifty Ruling Princes and a hundred of the States Representatives. The splendour of it only seemed to strengthen the sense of unreality and pathos surrounding the princely order at this time. When unity of purpose was of overwhelming importance for them, they were to be seen uneasy and obsessed with their own problems of precedence, each anxiously watching what the other was doing and, as a Dewan remarked of one of them, 'wandering about like a letter without a stamp'.
>
> Those of their Highnesses who had not already signified their intention of signing the Instrument of Accession were duly shepherded by the A.D.Cs., one by one for a friendly talk with Lord Mountbatten. He in his turn passed them on in the full view of the company to V.P. Menon, who conducted them across the room to see Sardar. There were Maharajas, three deep in a semi-circle, watching this process.
>
> One veteran Prince was heard to remark 'Who's H.E. getting to work on now?' Craning forward to see, he added with relish, 'There is no need for him to work on me, I'm signing tomorrow.' Mr. Fay overheard the following exchange between an old Prince and a young one.
>
> The old Prince asked, 'How are things in your states?'
>
> The young Prince replied, 'We have been having trouble in one place (which we named), but we have reached a settlement now.'
>
> 'We have trouble everywhere', the old Prince exclaimed, but I don't let it reach the stage of a settlement.'

By 31 July all the hurdles had been crossed and all the knots unravelled and the Instruments of Accession and the standstill agreement were

approved by the full negotiating Committee. During the subsequent week most of the Rulers signified their willingness to sign the two precious documents but some stood out, the prominent among them being Hyderabad, Jammu and Kashmir, Travancore, Bhopal, Indore, Dholpur, Nabha, Junagadh and Jodhpur. All these had mixed motives for their aloofness. Hyderabad had held to a dream of Independence and separate existence. Jammu and Kashmir had its difficulties which Sardar fully appreciated and for which he was prepared to wait. Travancore asserted its Independence on the transfer of power. Bhopal believed in the evolution of a third force and was more in line with the ideas of Sir Conrad Corfield on this subject. Jodhpur got himself involved in unfortunate intrigues with Jinnah who gave him a blank cheque if he acceded to Pakistan. Indore, Dholpur, and Nabha were prepared to follow the lead of Bhopal. Lord Mountbatten actively engaged himself in trying to persuade C P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, the Dewan of Travancore, to accede to India. He finally persuaded him to agree to accession. But Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, on his return, had to contend with a strong agitation by the Travancore Congress and was subsequently attacked and seriously wounded. Travancore's accession was followed by Sardar's instructions to the Travancore State Congress to suspend their campaign of direct action. The Maharaja of Jodhpur had literally to be enticed away during the course of one of his visits to Jinnah and tackled by Sardar who was a friend of his father and towards whom the Maharaja displayed an attitude of veneration and respect. Thereafter, the Maharaja was taken to Lord Mountbatten and after he had successfully persuaded him into doing so, he signed the Instrument of Accession. The Nawab of Bhopal who was a personal friend of Lord Mountbatten had not attended the meeting on 25 July but later was persuaded to sign the Instrument of Accession. Characteristically, the *Nawab* made it a condition that his signature should not be announced for some days after the transfer of power. This was because he was deeply committed to the Maharaja of Indore, Dholpur and Nabha to oppose accession and felt that a premature disclosure would compromise his position. Finally, however, all of them, Dholpur Bharatpur, Bilaspur and Nabha, signed the Instrument of Accession before 15 August since they realised that if they did not do so, they might be treated in a different category altogether after Independence.

Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir remained. Sardar had met the Prime Minister of Kashmir, Shri Ram Chandra Kak late in June when question of accession of Kashmir had been discussed but he did not force the issue and was content to leave Kashmir, in view of the complications involved, out of the accession list. Through some of the emissaries of the Maharaja who had sought Sardar's advice, Sardar had counselled caution and patience and was against any hurried commitment. When Lord Mountbatten visited Kashmir earlier, Sardar had told him that if in view of the wishes of his people the Maharaja decided of his own free will to accede to Pakistan he would not stand in his way. During that visit,

Lord Mountbatten pressed upon the Maharaja the need of an early decision and had given an exposition of the governing factors which the Maharaja thought tended towards accession to Pakistan. Apart from the fact that the Maharaja was by nature fickle-minded and indecisive, he realised what accession to Pakistan meant and refused to himself. Finally, on the day Lord Mountbatten was to get a decision from him and thereafter leave the Stete, the Maharaja feigned illness and matters were left in a state of suspense. Sardar was in no hurry to get the Maharaja to accede to India and therefore applied no methods of pressure or persuasion that he should do so. On the other hand, he was quite content to let things remain for some time, partly because the boundaries of India were still to be determined and partly because he realised that the choice of the Maharaja was one of the most difficult that faced any ruler.

In the meantime, the Maharaja dismissed Shri Ram Chandar Kak from Prime Ministership of the State and appointed General Janak Singh in his place. General Janak Singh telegraphically informed both India and Pakistan that the State would enter into a standstill arrangement with them. Even at this stage whilst Pakistan readily gave its assent, Sardar made no response for he thought it best not to become involved in an arrangement which might be construed as being on a par with Pakistan in its relations with the State of Jammu and Kashmir; he also felt that any such arrangement without more durable physical links than aerial communication would not be desirable.

After expressing an intention to accede to India, the Nawab of Junagadh became the victim of Pakistani intrigue in which the leading participants were Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto who was the Dewan and Sir Mohammad Zafarullah Khan who was the Nawab's adviser on constitutional matters. Under these influences the *Nawab* changed his mind and signed an accession to Pakistan contrary to every compelling factor that was relevant to the issue. This upset Sardar considerably and he felt that the problem of Junagadh should be tackled with determination and speed. Junagadh situated as it was in the midst of Kathiawad States and with a sea-front of its own posed a substantial security risk to India, if Pakistan secured a foothold there. Apart from this, Junagadh constituted a solitary defeat of Sardar's policy regarding the States on which he had set his heart and for which he had laboured hard and skilfully. Henceforward Junagadh became an issue of patriotism and prestige for him and he began to organise in his own quiet and efficient way, resistance to accession to Pakistan from within the State itself. In this task he utilised the services of the Kathiawar Princes led by the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar and the leading subjects of Junagadh outside the State led by Samaldas Gandhi, a nephew of Gandhiji. So determined was he to bring about a change in the shortest possible time that these matters became the continuous preoccupation of V. P. Menon and the States Department. The accession of States like Mangrol, Manavadar and other small principalities which were taken to be the feudataries of the State of Junagadh was secured. The organisation of the

Provisional Government or *Arzi Hakumat* by Samaldas Gandhi was finally accepted in order to secure quick results. In the process it is interesting to recall that Sardar turned down Lord Mountbatten's idea that the question of Junagadh might be referred to the United Nations Organisation. Energetic action was taken on the military front to preserve the peace and security of Saurashtra that was threatened by this development and one by one the feudatory States of Junagadh were taken over by the Government of India whilst *Arzi Hakumat* secured control over the Junagadh Islands in Saurashtra. A battle of words was, in the meantime, going on between India and Pakitan. It resulted in an angry exchange of telegraphic correspondence and also heated discussions at the joint meetings of leaders of India and Pakistan. Sardar displayed firmness and determination in dealing with the issue and resisted any attempt on the part of Lord Mountbatten to find a *via media* and even to soften the measures in the hope of avoiding an open conflict.

Eight

Transfer of power—the aftermath

THE FIRE of communal passion had already been roused intensively on both sides of the dividing line between India and Pakistan but more intensively in Pakistani areas than on the Indian side of the frontier. If anybody had thought—as far as my recollection goes, there was none such—that Partition would quench these fires, he was greatly mistaken. Even the military solution of a joint military force under the British command miserably failed, so deep and widespread was the communal virus. The result was that not only had passions been roused but they had become, for the time being, the prominent traits of men, women and children of three main communities—the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. I, who had seen first-hand and heard and read about the communal frenzy in my own home-province, U.P., in the twenties of this century under the conflict of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan v. Tabligh* and *Tanzim* culminating in the martyrdom of Swami Shradhanand, felt that even those bloody days had been thrown into shade, so widespread had become the hostility and so bloodthirsty was the atmosphere. Reprisals and counter-reprisals were the order of the day; the minority community was being squeezed out of the important Pakistani towns under the general threat and spectacle of violence; Multan, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar—all suffered this fate; the position was particularly difficult in Lahore which was a bone of contention during the proceedings of the Tribunal and as such was an arena of intensive 'warfare' of the worst type. Amritsar, Jullundur, Patiala and, to a comparatively small extent, Delhi provided the Indian counter.

The holocaust continued even after the Partition. Under the active policy of the respective communities—in the case of Pakistan, inspired and encouraged by those in Government—large caravans of men, women and children with their belongings loaded in bullock-carts, cars or trucks left their respective areas to find new shelters and a new life. These caravans—which I was privileged to see from the aircraft in which Lord Mountbatten so thoughtfully arranged to carry Pandit Nehru and Sardar—were several miles long and were subjected to the untold hardships of wind and weather as well as thefts and killings. Braving all these, these children of the soil till only yesterday and strangers to the land today, carried with them happy memories of the past but uncertainties of the future. Their watchwords were safety and peaceful life, being little mindful at the time of the hard struggle ahead of them. They had their last

lingering look at what was once their home but which now fell under the covetous eyes of their neighbours. Many of them not only lost their belongings or their homes; they also lost their dear ones. The aged succumbed either to the assassin's knife or bullet or to the privations of the journey, girls in the freshness of their youth had become the target of the ravenous eyes of lustful passersby, women suckling their infants at their breast were the victims of rape, perpetrated by criminals who enjoyed the protection of communal zealots and the immunity of lawlessness. In brief, to the wast human targedy that had engulfed millions that constituted these caravans, was added the unprecedented misery of living through a situation in which 'men were not men and law was not law'.

Whilst in Pakistan—a theocratic State—the position of the Government in dealing with the situation was not so difficult, in India, wedded to secularism and not believing in the two or multi-nation theory, the position of Government was unenviable. The composition of the Cabinet was heterogenous; the Congress with its objective and faith in secularism, and consisting of representatives of all communities was of course in a large majority. However, there were some with communal affiliations; Shyama Prasad Mukerji, Ambedkar with his 'separate' mentality, Sardar Baldev Singh, definitely at heart a Sikh and John Mathai representing the Christian community. It is not that all these necessarily represented the communal point of view but the fact is that in their attitudes on matters involving communal considerations they could not ignore their past or their communities just as many Congress Hindus and 'nationalist' Muslim did not. The need for adjustments of communal interests under the banner of secularism was, therefore, clear and some dilution of a absolute secularism was thus inevitable where a consensus had to emerge out of this heterogenity.

The position of Pandit Nehru and Sardar was particularly difficult in this set-up and in these circumstances. There is no doubt that Sardar's dilutad secularism was more popular and had more adherents than Pandit Nehru's absolute secularism. I am using the words 'diluted' and 'absolute' not in disparagement of the one or to the credit of other, but merely to distinguish between the two attitudes. I would contest very strongly the view that Sardar was communal or displayed communal sympathies or antipathies in his conduct and behaviour. The fact is that he did not mean any non-Hindu any harm nor did he deliberately do any injustice to him. In fact, as my narrative would show, there are many instances to the contrary and his sponsoring of the Minority Committee Report of the Constituent Assembly and the ovation he received at the end of it bear ample testimony to his scrupulous regard for the just rights of the minorities. What he held and rightly so, was that secluarism did not mean the abandonment of Hinduism or the utter disregard of Hindus or Hindu interests but an objective and fair attitude to other religions and the interests of other religious communities. He was opposed to obsession with

Muslims or Muslim interests and insisted on a supreme test for all, namely, loyalty to the country and patriotism. This was the burden of his much criticised and, at the same time much praised speech at Lucknow during the fateful days of December 1947—January 1948. He was particularly critical of Pandit Nehru and even Gandhiji devoting themselves mostly to voicing their feelings for the oppressed Muslims and emphasising the need for safeguarding their interests without saying anything about or at least anything comparable to, though not necessarily proportionate to, what the Hindus and Sikhs were suffering, both in India and Pakistan. I think that on the whole, Sardar was right in judging the temper of the people at the time as the grim tragedies showed, climaxing in the dastardly assassination of Gandhiji himself. The over-voicing of the feelings of, and over-emphasis on the fate of only one community when all were suffering undoubtedly contributory to the gross misunderstanding that fouled the atmosphere of these days.

As regards Pandit Nehru he adopted a commendable but not necessarily popular idealistic attitude on these matters. To him, any victimisation of or violence on a Muslim was abhorrent to the point of driving him to desperation. His reactions on the reverse situation were seldom so strongly expressed or followed up. He would take infinite pains over the case of an alleged victimised Muslim but not the same attention could be expected where a member of another community was involved. This was not surprising considering his idealistic attitude to secularism, his passion for securing justice and fairplay for Muslims and Muslim interests and his watchful regard for showing to the outside world that India had a clean record of dealing with the minorities. He genuinely believed that as the Head of Government and as Congress Leader he owed a special responsibility to the minorities, particularly the Muslim and that the retention of Muslims and the security of their life and property was the supreme test of India's secularism. The point he missed, however, was as a former Governor, by no means pro-Hindu, put it 'if they went on conceding the demands of the protection of minorities a stage would come when the majority community would have to be protected.' What made matters worse was that the ears of Sardar and Pandit Nehru used to be poisoned assiduously by interested communalists of one community or the other against each other. But my own experience was that there was more poison doled out in Pandit Nehru's and Gandhiji's circle against Sardar than there was in Sardar's circle against Pandit Nehru or Gandhiji. The fact of the matter was that the passions of all communities had been roused as a result of the events preceding and following Independence and it was impractical for any leading personality to ignore or belittle the position and feeling of any other community. Any attitude of compartmentalisation was bound to lead to mounting misunderstandings and prove harmful, if hot disastrous; the need of a balance approach was thus paramount. I regret to say that this balanced approach was found wanting to a greater or lesser degree in the utterances of the leaders of

parties and public opinion at the time but the greatest danger came from those who, under the cloak of secularism, were advancing the interests of one particular community.

Another serious difficulty at the time was the absence of good commuication between leaders. The telephonic communications had suffered particular strain as a result of the League coming into Government and subsequently, the Partition. The leaders, particularly Sardar and Pandit Nehru being constantly on the move in different areas seldom met except during their short halts in Delhi. Their correspondence to one another from different quarters was hardly a contributory factor to understanding and assessment. Divisive forces were at work and the visible scenes of sufferings and victimisation were apt to cloud the vision After *all*, even great men are human beings and prone to human failings and errors. Distance generally leads to more misunderstandings. I myself experienced the beneficial results of nearness when Pandit Nehru was staying in 17 York Road, a stone's throw away from 1 Aurangzeb Road, the residence of Sardar. They met in a private informal and happy domestic atmosphere at least once a day and disposed of, to their mutual satisfaction, anything that worried or concerned them. But a shift to the previous Commander-in-Chief's House at Teenmurti on Roberts Road, later in the year, made this impossible. The result was that matters had to be pursued through the written rather than the spoken word. It is much more difficult to resile from or recall the written word than the spoken word. What is worse, there are so many more witnesses to the former than the latter, *each creating on occasions a circle of misunderstanding* either in *private* or in public either through rumour or through blatant misrepresentation.

Morley has said:, 'Mankind is seldom logical and never so in a mass.' This is particularly true when mankind is roused to a state of frenzy on the crest of an emotional wave. In such a situation, the thin line between the beast and man is obliterated and he becomes as blood-thirsty as a beast. The position is worsened even further when the emotional wave is permeated by religious fanaticism. Madame Rolland is reported to have said at the time of facing the guillotine during the French Revolution, 'Liberty, what crimes are being committed in thy names?' Worse crimes than those are committed in the name of religion throughout the world. Religious wars and upheavals, the inquisition, the burning of heretics on the stake, the wars and raids against infidels, conversions at the point of the sword, arson, rape and pillage have all received religious approval and sanctity, whether scriptural, or decretal or have taken place in the name of a religious cause.

The events in India and Pakistan in 1947 were in line with all these except that the underlying motive force was a mixture of religion and politics. This made it worse, for political leadership in such circumstances becomes weakened, divided and confused. The sight of erstwhile citizens of a country moving out to a divided area, viewed no longer as a common heritage but as an alien land, was bound to provoke antipathy, if not

hostility, and since the dividing line was the religion of the two communites, matters were made worse for them; to the crime lese-patriotism is added the sin of belonging to another faith. Such then was the psychology of the people on both sides of the border that was drawn up to divide Pakistan from India.

Unfortunately for the country, it did not have securely established and well-equipped administration to deal with this unprecedented and grave emergency. It was an administration in the process of division and separation and in a state of confusion, uncertainty and even divided loyalties that was called upon to handle the mass upheaval in which no man could be certain of the morrow. Even in the past, under better circumstances a settled administration had found it impossible to guarantee peace and safety of individuals or communities. Much more difficult was the task of this administration, still in its formative stage. The Army was being divided; its equipment was in the pool of division, many units were physically on the move; the headquarters were in the process of being set up; there is no doubt that psychologically its men on both sides were affected by contemporary events and emotions and the highly-charged atmosphere. The all India Services had also not settled down in their new environment. The Provincial Civil and Police Services of the Punjab were also in a disarray. The population on both sides was on the move and since March 1947, the many areas in the Punjab had been in flames. Religious leaders and certain political figures were actively operating behind the scenes to fan the flames. In such conditions, the fire could at best be controlled and only then quenched; the process could only be a gradual one.

A question arises whether all this could not have been foreseen and provided for. That Partition would lead to blooshed under the prevailing circumstances seemed quite obvious. Intelligence reports and portents clearly pointed to such events and eventualities but I doubt if anyone could have predicted the scale or dimensions of the tragic events that overtook the country. No one had any idea of the extent and depth to which the poison of hate and hostility had permeated the body politic, due to the activities of the League and other Muslim communal organisations, the Hindu Mahasabha, the R.S.S. and the militant Sikh religious organisations, commanding large followings among the country's masses. There was an active move on the part of Muslims in U.P., Rajasthan and Ajmer for migration to the future Western Pakistan. This had acquired momentum as the date of Partition approached. It excited the local Hindu and Sikh population against their remaining behind, when loyalty and sympathy could not be taken for granted. The general feeling was that if all this resulted in a shedding of blood, the price of freedom had to be paid and in any case the price would be much less than if the event developed, under a state of continuing tension and confused coalition government, into a full-scale civil war with unpredictable consequences. Taking all the prevailing circumstances and conditions into consideration and the depth of passions that had been roused, I would be inclined to

the view that what happened could not have been prevented and that it was a substantial achievement that the mischief was localised and only the western portions of the country were seriousty affected.

There is no doubt that little thought had been given to this problem before the decision was taken in May 1947 to part with power on the basis of the two Dominions. After 3rd June 1947, the main preoccupation of both the wings of Government was with the details and incidents of Partition; to put it crudely they were busy dividing the 'spoils', somewhat unmindful of the 'wolf' that was surreptitiously entering the fold. The position in this part of the sub-continent was somewhat analogous to that obtaining in India in 1857 before the Mutiny broke out. The movement had spread insidiously and underground; the administration was not yet consolidated; authority had trodden on too many corns; there had been wide-spread and deep-seated dislocation and discontentment; the atmosphere was explosive; It needed only a spark to ignite and explode. It did explode with a vengeance and what a bloody tragedy it was.

Sardar had always maintained that law and order was likely to be the main casualty of the activities of the League. He felt instinctively that there was bound to be retaliation and counter-retaliation and that in a mass upheaval of rioting, arson, pillage and other forms of disturbance, counsels of peace and leaving the law to take its course would not be of any avail. It is in order to forestall these developments that he had counselled the Provinces to raise their own security forces with central assistance so that the Army could be free to deal with its own basic tasks. He had been warning the Chief Ministers from time to time of the threats to security that would be posed and the dangers that were lurking owing to the activities of the communal organisations. He had no quarrel with the legitimate constructive activities of communal organisations aimed at the regeneration or improvement of the conditions of their communities but any threat to law and order and peace and integrity of the State must be dealt with, with a strong hand. His strategy in dealing with such outbreaks of violence was to nip it in the bud and deal drastically with the situation in advance when it threatened, or on the first day itself so that it did not spread. This was the strategy he had followed in dealing with such situations in Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere where he could function effectively through his own officers or his own party Chief and Home Ministers.

But in Provinces like Punjab and Bengal it was a different story. Neither the Governors nor the Chief Ministers, as the case may be, were in the amenable category. Any one who studies the events of those days can see for himself that these outbreaks were dealt with more expeditiously and effectively in the Provinces in which Sardar exercised control than in those in which he did not. An atmosphere of 'tension and foreboding' had begun to plague the country soon after the plan of 3 June announced. To a large extent, this affected the Punjab and not so much Bengal even though both were to be subjected to Partition. The Sikhs were in a state

of ferment on one side of the anticipated line and had their sympathisers on the other. The same applied to Muslims on this side. In U.P. and areas of Bihar and Rajasthan (Ajmer included), the Muslim community struck by a mood of uncertainty and impending dislocation in their established life, vainly hoped for a life in the promised land. What was worse was that in these areas, others completely lost their faith in the loyalty and fellow-feeling of their neighbours of the Muslim community. Fears and apprehensions rather than facts and events began to grip their mind and imagination.

But the storm-centre was the Punjab and as the crucial date of 15 August 1947 approached, tension, killings, arson and stabbings began to mount, aimed clearly at the extermination or exit of the members of the rival community. The scene can be aptly described in the following words of Lord Ismay quoted by Campbell-Johnson in his book *Mission with Mountbatten*.

> There is so much explosive material lying about and it remains to be seen whether it can be prevented from going off. I am, for example, extremely worried about the Sikhs. They imagine that they are going to get a far more favourable boundary than so far as I can judge, any Commission can possibly award them. All possible precautions have been taken by the despatch to the areas of potential trouble, of a joint India-Pakistan force under single command but even so it may be a very unpleasant business. The truth of the matter is that both sides are in a panic and people do sillier things when they are frightened than they do under the stress of any other emotion.

The reference in the quotation is to the setting up of the Boundary force in the Punjab partition area, to operate in twelve districts which, it was expected were likely to be affected. The force was as I have earlier mentioned to consist of some fifty-thousand officers and men of mixed units and contain a high proportion of British officers under the command of Major-General Rees. Notwithstanding this, the situation continued to deteriorate and a harassed Governor made persistent calls on the Viceroy for more troops and security forces. At one time there was a move to arrest Master Tara Singh and other important Sikh leaders but it was abandoned after Sardar's adverse reaction supported by the Governors of the two Provinces of West and East Punjab, namely Shri Francis Mudie and Sir Chandulal Trivedi, and Sir Even Jenkins, the then Governor of United Punjab. The events in the Punjab seemed, however, to take the course set by those of the past few months. There were attacks and counter-attacks by one community against the other in one area or the other but the scale of disturbance, though large had not acquired uncontrollable dimensions. The situation was causing all of us considerable apprehension and anxiety but not sleepless nights at the cost of the discharge of other responsibilities connected with Partition and the transfer of power. It

was really the disillusionment and the finality of the Radcliffe award. almost identically with the date of Partition that appreared to have sent up popular passions on both sides rocket-high and since the Boundary Force failed to control the situation, it became the target of attack. Ultimately after a stormy session of the Joint Defence Council, which had been set up, it was obvious that its days were numbered. After 15 August, the scale of violence, disturbances and reprisals attained dimensions which placed the peace and security of millions and their hearths and homes in the Punjab, Delhi, parts of Rajasthan and West U.P. at the mercy of miscreants and active anti-social elements. Events marched so rapidly that even a joint tour by Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan and Pandit Nehru failed to avert their progress; the reports of a mission which was periodically undertaken by Lady Mountbatten and Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur to visit refugee camps towards the end of August were disquieting in the extreme. Finally the meeting of the Joint Defence Council on 30 August 1947 at Lahore, which was attended by Jinnah, gave the 'coup de grace' to the Boundary Force and the task of maintaining law and order in the disturbed areas passed from the Force and the Joint Council, presided over by Lord Mountbatten, to the two Dominions.

The fire of Communal frenzy kindled in the main town of the Punjab was soon transformed into a conflagration in Lahore, Sheikhupura, Sialkot and Gujranwala Districts culminating in large-scale killings in the town of Sheikhupura. I particularly recall the last as I write, for vivid stories of untold and unprecedented tragedies began to circulate all over Hindu and Sikh majority towns in the Punjab and Delhi, all of which were already brimful of refugees from West Pakistan. Stories were circulated of the massacre of women and children, of girls immolating themselves in the raging fires to avoid being captured and violated, men jumping from the roof-tops to their doom on the floor below to evade fate at the hands of blood-thirsty assassins, of the inactivity in dealing with these disturbances and of the active assistance of the Police and Army units to miscreants. All this swelled the numbers of marchers to safety and caused reprisals in East Punjab. Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Patiala, Faridkot and other States of the East Punjab agency swiftly fell a victim to the general clamour for vangeance and the western districts of Meerut and Saharanpur were soon to follow. East Punjab, without an effective Government and no effective concert between the headquarters and the Districts and *tehsils* could not control the situation. Authority both in West and East Punjab, was weakened because of the difficulties of political leaders and the administration in dealing with millions of frenzied people. One needed a policeman at every citizen's elbow to deal with the situation; instead one had not even one per thousand.

Sardar felt deeply concerned with the trend of events. He was in daily touch with the Governor and Chief Minister and the Home Minister of East Punjab, Shri Chandulal Trivedi, Dr. Gopi Ch and Bhargava and

Sardar Swaran Singh. He frequently met Master Tara Singh and counselled restraint and patience. To his plea for protection in West Punjab where as far as I remember, Gyani Kartar Singh was still functioning in an unhelpful manner. Sardar could only give the advice which Gandhiji had often uttered, 'It is better to die resisting like *a* brave man than to live like a coward.' Master Tara Singh is so well-known to the contemporary generation that any detailed description of him is unnecessary. All the same, I would like to give my assessment of him. I regard 'Masterji' as a warning to the future generations rather than as an example to them.

During those troublesome days, Master Tara Singh used to come to see Sardar and narrate his tales of woe and his apprehensions about the life and property of the Sikhs and the position of Sikh shrines in the Pakistan-to-be. He made no secret of his intention to organise the Sikhs to stand up for their rights and defend themselves and their property, but never was there any indication that he was at the back of organisations aiming to exterminate the Muslims from the Punjab. Whenever these instances were cited he would take the stand that emotions of hate and revenge had been roused and if Government itself was unable to control them how could he be expected to do so.

Masterji would alight from his car at the steps of the house with a sheathed sword in hand, breathing secrecy and determination and displaying sureness of his gait and thoughtfulness. His forehead was generally forward. There was a slight stoop in his stand and this used to recall to my mind Browning's words, 'as if to balance the prone brow oppressive with its mind.' Master Tara Singh's politics seemed to be governed more by instinct than by reason and while he loved his country, he loved his community much more. He was obstinate and stubborn, both dangerous traits when added to his obscurantism. He had however acquired considerable faith in Sardar as a man of word and action and knew that Sardar genuinely grieved for the fate of Hindu and Sikh minorities in the Punjab. He also knew that if he needed funds for the relief and rehabilitation of the Sikhs, only Sardar could help him. He sought this help on occasions. I would not credit him with much intelligence or imagination. He had a dual personality not unusual in a religious-cum-politic leader, and undoubtedly ruled the minds of a large proportion of the Sikh population on both sides of the border. He was an uncompromising adherent of what he believed to be the interests of his community. Sardar Baldev Singh and he were good friends. The Jathedars of the Sikh community also acquired a position of peculiar importance for, in the type of ferment that was prevailing, religious inclination, and influence inevitably acquired a supremacy of its own.

In the meantime the bloody course of the provincial disturbances continued and so did its repercussions elsewhere until Delhi itself was engulfed in it. Muslims in Delhi had taken a leading part in League activities. Delhi was the hub of the League universe; the fountain-head of its propaganda and source of its instructions. The Muslim community was both

well-organised and heavily concentrated in certain areas. The majority of the arms and ammunition dealers belonged to that community and a number of gangsters came from it. Rumours were rampant that the Muslims of the city had organised themselves for large-scale violence in a bid to keep the city, which was once the seat of their empire and had all along been the cradle of their language and culture, for themselves. The whole atmosphere was eminently suited for attack and counter-attack. To add to the difficulties, the Services were in a state of flux and disorder. I would quote here V.P. Menon's words which aptly describe the situation.

> The local Administration was very soon faced with a task far beyond its capacity. Many of those of its Muslim officers, who were drawn from the Punjab had opted to serve Pakistan. Their withdrawal caused an almost crippling depletion of the officers cadre. More than 50 per cent of the staff and almost 75 per cent of the Armed Police Force had been drawn from amongst the Muslims and all of them had their heart in and were keen to opt for Pakistan. They obviously could not be relied upon in an emergency; in fact, there were persistent rumours that they were planning to go over to the Muslim side together with their-firearms; nor were the non-Muslim section of the Force more reliable. Many of the Hindu Policemen had been drawn from the Punjab and they had seen and heard of what had happened to their friends and relations in the Western part of the Province. The gaps in the officers' cadre had been hastily filled by optees from West Pakistan, who had themselves experienced or witnessed the worst features of communal fury in West Punjab and the N.W.F.P. Few of them were in a fit mental state to take strong action against rioters. For some time, only a handful of troops were present in the Capital and they could not be replenished quickly because many of the firearms which had fallen to the share of India were still locked up in Pakistan.

In an explosive situation of the type described above even small incidents acquired an exaggerated importance. With Delhi full of grief-stricken refugees coming in, and panic-stricken refugees wanting to get out, the situation was getting worse. There occurred towards the end of August, an explosion and stabbing incidents. Sardar was quick to see the dangerous possibilities of the worsening situation all round the Capital city. The Chief Commissioner of the time was a Senior Muslim ICS officer with a reputation for efficiency which he acquired in his home Province, Uttar Pradesh, and in Ajmer-Merwara, of which previously he was the Chief Commissioner. He came from a distinguished Muslim family of nationalist views and was himself decidely non-communal in his outlook. So surcharged was the atmosphere in Delhi that even he could not escape suspicion. Neither Sardar nor I felt that there was any ground for this but whispers have their own immunity and freedom and because of their invidiousness they acquired a dangerously poisonous effect. Because of the

absence of Pandit Nehru from Delhi and Sardar's disinclination to take any major line without previous discussion with him. Sardar was deeply concerned at the manner in which the situation was slipping out of the hands of Government and events were taking a dangerous course, unchecked. He had full confidence in the Chief Commissioner, as also in the Deputy Commissioner, Shri M.S. Randhawa, who was known as a man of firm action. Finding the crisis in Delhi somewhat deepening, Sardar agreed with the District Magistrate of Delhi to impose curfew in the city from 28 August to 1 September 1947. Things somewhat quietened down but it proved to be the proverbial lull before the storm, which broke out on 4 September 1947 after an explosion of a bomb in a Hindu locality in Karolbagh, culminating in riots and disturbances and in many cases, looting and stabbing. Sardar felt that if the Capital city went up in flames, it would be impossible—immensely difficult as the task everywhere was—to arrest the course of events in the entire western portion of northern India. He took a very serious view of the situation.

On one occasion, he quietly discussed the events of the past few weeks with me. It was a masterly survey of the entire course of history since 3 June 1947 and in retrospect I feel that had he been given full authority to deal with the situation, it would have been impossible for such vast areas to be enveloped in disturbances of the kind which were occurring. He felt that strong action, irrespective of the consequences or even the toll of lives that might be taken in the process, was the need of the hour. He cryptically remarked that when a house is on fire, some damage to the neighbour's house in order to quench it and save them from the damage, was justified. What was needed was severe deterrent action against marauders, looters, robbers and those who were engaged in incendiarism. It was this approach which had induced him to strengthen the law against rioting and disturbances even to the point of making certain offences punishable with death. He approved of stern action at the beginning of the trouble even though, strictly speaking, it might offend against the principle of employment of minimum force. Unfortunately, however, he was not in a position to take this action everywhere in view of the various limitations to which attention has already been drawn and in view of the possibility that any action involving the Muslim population might subject him to a clash with Pandit Nehru or even with Gandhiji.

He asked me what I felt should be done in the circumstances. All that I could suggest on the spot was that he and Pandit Nehru should have a heart-to-heart talk. I thought that Pandit Nehru would not disagree with him on the need of firm and effective action and that it might be possible for him to get over his sensitiveness as regards the Muslims. He then happened to remark that it was a pity that even Lord Mountbatten was not available at the Capital since he was at that time in Simla. I suggested that it might be a good thing to request him to come down to Delhi and take charge of the situation, particularly since both he and Paddit Nehru would be away. Lord Mountbatten, I added, with his military insight and

outlook, might be able to introduce some order. He jumped at the idea and told me that he knew that something good would emerge out of our discussions. He told me to convey to V. P. Menon his view that Lord Mountbatten should be pursuaded to come down to Delhi. Next morning, accordingly, I went to V. P. Menon's house and apprised him of our conversation. V.P., after some discussion, readily agreed that Lord Mountbatten was, in the present situation, the best bridge between Pandit Nehru and Sardar and could also ensure that the Central Government's decisions to deal with the situation were taken in a comprehensive and orderly manner.

Lord Mountbatten readily agreed to come down and as he arrived at the Government House during the afternoon of 6 September 1947, V.P. Menon, as told by Campbell Johnson, was awaiting him with a message from Sardar, hoping that he would 'bring the situation firmly under control without dealy'. Lord Mountbatten was quick to suggest that an Emergency Committee be set up. Sardar and Pandit Nehru both suggested that Lord Mountbatten should head such a Committee. Sardar's faith in Mountbatten's leadership was eminently justified. He organised matters scientifically and according to the needs of the situation, including a command headquarters and regular daily meetings of the Emergency Committee, and resorted to a War Map Room procedure to provide the Cabinet and himself with full and detailed information about developments. The Committee dealt with various issues. There was a discussion on the imposition of Martial Law but it was ruled out and instead it was proposed to strengthen the local machinery. It was decided to take firm action against the Sikhs as well as against anti-social elements. Sardar and Panditji were on common ground in dealing with the situation. The Delhi situation was worsening and it was finally decided at a subsequent meeting to constitute a Committee for Delhi as well, headed by C.H. Bhabha, with its headquarters in the Town Hall in the city.

As a result of the strong action taken, and in particular Sardar's appeal to the Sikhs, the situation in Delhi began to improve. This gave some relief to Sardar for here was a clear case of strong and firm action succeeding in creating a better atmosphere. In the meantime, however, a number of Muslim families had left their homes and concentrated in certain localites as well as at the Purana Qila Fort. The situation in West Pakistan had, however, further deteriorated. It had spread even to N.W.F.P. and Peshawar was not only in a state of ferment but virtually in flames, The Emergency Committee met from day to day and reviewed the position. It took far-reaching decisions not only to deal with the problem of law and order but also the problem of transporting refugees such as arrangements for special trains for them to go over to Pakistan; rounding up of arms and arresting of delinquents and guarding [illegible] by the military and police. It also ensured the normal functioning of offices.

There was an interesting development regarding the Purana Qila Muslim

refugees. Many of them appeared to be unwilling to go to Pakistan and consequently there was pressure for the suspension of trains leaving for Pakistan. Dr. Zakir Hussain told me once that he himself had argued with Sardar in favour of such a step but Sardar disputed the wisdom of doing so, though he finally agreed to give it a trial. Those very people (Dr. Zakir Hussain included) who felt that Muslims were wanting to stay behind were subjected to indignities when the other Muslim refugees of the Purana Qila Camp found that they were to be prevented from going to Pakistan. This confirmed what Sardar all along felt that irrespective of the situation most of the Muslims of Delhi who had left their houses were intent on moving to Pakistan.

At the suggestion of Lord Mountbatten and at the invitation of Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, Pandit Nehru went to Lahore, accompanied by Sardar, and discussed the situation, as convoys were moving on both sides. Nothing much came out of these meetings though they provided some hope to the people that at least the two Governments were on talking terms. The situation in Delhi however, was soon brought under control.

A sort of order was restored in the neighbouring districts of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and in East Punjab and lawlessness prevailed in various cities of East punjab and the adjoining areas. What made matters worse was that refugee trains going to Pakistan were subjected to untold tragedies of violence and abduction of girls belonging to different communities. The situation was particularly bad in Amritsar where riots had broken out and attacks on trains continued. The two Sikh leaders, Master Tara Singh and Sardar Udham Singh Nagoke made appeals to their co-religionists to desist from shameful attacks on women and children adding that if they had to fight again it would be a clean fight · man against man. Amritsar was a vital point through which the Muslim caravans had to pass. The events in September convinced Sardar that action should be taken at once to safeguard the lives of the Muslim refugees on this side in order to put pressure on the Government of Pakistan to guarantee the safety of Hindu and Sikh caravans on the other side which were moving towards Ballokhi Head with a view to crossing over to India. He decided, on his own, to make a dash to Amritsar where he had asked the Governor and the Chief Minister of East Punjab to join him and arrange a meeting with Sikh leaders and *Jathedars*. This was on 30 September 1947. Maniben and I accompanied him and saw at first hand, how dexterously he dealt with the Sikh leaders who, in Sardar's judgement, held the key to ensuring peace in Amritsar and its surroundings. He had a quiet talk with the Sikh leaders in which he pressed upon them the need for ensuring peace on our side, so that the lives of men, wamen and children who left Pakistan and were on the way to India, were saved. He pledged himself by saying that if he found that the Pakistan Government was unable to ensure the safety of the Hindu and Sikh refugees, he would not hesitate to take them to task. So electric was the atmosphere and so quick was the response that all the Sikh leaders and *Jathedars* unani-

mously pledged to keep peace in all of punjab, not only in Amritsar and to hold themselves responsible for the safety of the big Muslim caravan which was to pass Amritsar in a few days. His appeal to the Sikh leaders is reproduced below:

> I appeal to the Sikh leaders to throw in their weight for the maintenance of peace in the interests of millions of men, women and children, many of whom have been trekking their way from West Punjab for three weeks now and are braving the elements and the worst physical conditions possible, in the ultimate hope of living among their own kith and kin.
>
> It behoves them in the larger interests of India in general and East Punjab in particular to so organize themselves as to assure safe passage to Muslim refugees travelling whether on foot or by trains or in trucks.
>
> I feel it is a disgrace to all, that military force should be used to compel them to give transit facilities; instead, I think it is in keeping with your dignity, reputation for valour and self-respect that you should raise a volunteer force which will come forward and guarantee camplete immunity from attacks to these refugees.
>
> All of you know how dear the Sikhs are to me and that I have nothing but the good of the community at heart. I feel it is the best interests of your community and of its future prosperity in East Punjab that the sooner we get our refugees the better. It is only then that you can create in East Punjab the garden which you created in West Punjab by your efforts and show to the world that a flower of manhood inhabits this sacred land.
>
> I appeal to you to break the vicious circle of attacks and retaliation at least for a week and then see if there is a satisfactory response. If you are disappointed, the whole world will know whom to hold irrevocably guilty.

Sardar felt very reassured and was returning to the airport to take his plane to Delhi when in the Municipal gardens, his jeep was surrounded by thousands of refugees from West Pakistan who wanted him to address them. I felt somewhat disturbed about his safety. I could see blood in the eyes of the refugees and thought that they were unlikely to listen to the message of peace and amity which was bound to be the burden of Sardar's appeal to them. I tried to dissuade him and even suggested that he might say that he would have to leave the airport before dark, but Sardar would not listen. Consequently, we had to improvise arrangements for a public meeting, including a dais and a loud speaker. What followed took my breath away. After one of the refugees and one of the Congress leaders of the Punjab addressed the gathering, Sardar stood up to do so in his simple but effective Hindi, full of noble sentiments, couched in an appropriate key to appeal to the people in their frame of mind and on that occasion. I took down notes of this speech

in long hand since it was easy to do so in view of the slow speed at which Sardar addressed all his public meetings. Subsequently, during the plane journey, I translated it into English and here I reproduce the translation in full.

I remember, how it is in this very same city, Amritsar that I held discussions a few years ago for raising a suitable memorial to the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh and how at Lahore for the first time we all—Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims—took the pledge of winning complete Independence. In the blood-bath of Jallianwala Bagh mingled the blood of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.

I am grieved to think that things have come to such a pass that no Muslim can go about in Amritsar and no Hindu or Sikh can even think of living in Lahore. The erection of a memorial to Jallianwala Bagh martyrs has become a painful memory and the hard-won freedom has been followed by such unspeakable tragedies. This is a situation which has brought dishonour and disgrace to all of us and India which looked forward to raising her stature in the eyes of the world after the attainment of Independence, has now to hang her head in shame.

Butchery of innocent and defenceless men, women and children does not behove brave men; it is the war of the jungle and the hall-mark of inhumanity and barbarity. There will be occasions and opportunities for all of you to show your zest for fight; one must seek for it one's ground and suitable time. It is now time not to be foolhardy or desperate but time to reflect calmly on your course of action.

We have won our freedom to make our country great and prosperous not to destroy what little has been vouchsafed to us by our alien rulers. If we are not carefull, we shall lose even our long-cherished freedom which we have secured after such suffering and so many struggles. You must remember that the lives of millions are at stake; they cannot be gambled away to enable us to satisfy any spirit of vengeance or retaliation. It is essential that you must maintain peace and break the vicious circle of attack and retaliation and counter-retaliation and see to it that the refugees have safe transit. Any obstacle in the way of refugee movement will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are fighting the elements, hunger, disease and maltreatment, to come to a land where they hope to find peace, shelter and opportunities to lead a peaceful and civilised existance. We should do nothing to shatter the hope which is probably the only thing that is sustaining them.

I am quite certain that India's interest lies in getting all her men and women across the border and sending out all Muslims from East Punjab. We can then settle down to the tremendous task of repairing the damage done and to make this land by the labours the same fruitful garden as our refugees have left behind.

I deprecate the demand for police and military aid which people are putting forward. Such a demand may befit the weak but it does not

suit the brave and able-bodied men of the Punjab. They should organize themselves on the right lines. The safety and defenee of the frontiers are the concern of the Government but at the same time people should organize themselves. The Government will give them arms and equipment if they know to use them on the right lines.

I have come to you with a specific appeal and that is to pledge the safety of Muslim refugees crossing the city. It is hardly creditable to us that we do not realise wherein our good lies. Muslim evacuees are going under agreed arrangements of exchange of pupulation. They should really need no protection but should be allowed to go in peace Bitterness fed by years of propaganda of hate has gone too deep to allow any Muslim to remain in the East Punjab and any Hindu or Sikh to live in West Punjab. It is, therefore, in the intesest of everyone that this exchange should be effected peacefully and smoothly. Any obstacles or hindrances will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are already performing prodigious feats of valour and endurance.

It does not become a brave people to prepetrate deeds of brutality on defenceless men, women and children. This is not dictated by any code of chivalry or honour. If others cast chivalry and honour to the winds it does not justify us in debasing ourselves. If we have to fight we must fight clean. Such a fight must await an appropriate time and conditions and you must be wary in choosing your ground.

To fight against the refugees is no fight at all. No laws of humanity or war among honourable men permit the murder of people who have sought shelter and protection. Such misdeeds on the other can be left to be tackled at a more opportune time.

I appeal to you to act with prudence and foresight. You should allow free and unmolested passage to the Muslim refugees.

Let there be a truce for three months in which both sides can exchange their refugees. This sort of truce is permitted even by laws of war. Let us take the initiative in breaking this vicious circle of attacks and counter-attacks. They do good to nobody; they can only do a great deal of harm to us.

If you do not have faith in the Pakistan Government or its people, you can hold your hands for a week and see what happens. If they do not observe the truce in the right spirit, the world will know who the breakers of the laws of humanity are. We shall then have every justification for holding them to account.

Make way for the refugees with your own force of volunteers and let them deliver the refugees safely at the frontier. Let the whole world see that we mean well and we mean business and it is they who have evil intentions and evil designs.

The response to this moving speech was spontaneous, quick and unrestrained and the refugees pledged themselves to guarantee the safety of the caravan that was to pass through that area and also to ensure that

peace and normal life returned to the whole of the Punjab. We then left for the airport and took the plane to Delhi. By the time I reached there, the script of the translation was ready and it was disturbed to the Press shortly after we landed at the Willingdon Airport. The translation appeared in the newspapers the next day. Lord Mountbatten was greatly impressed by the speech and remarked to V.P. Menon that he did not know that Sardar could speak such excellent English. V.P. Menon had to disillusion him and told him that what he had read was my translation of Sardar's speech which was delivered in Hindi. He added however, that if he heard Sardar's speech in the original, he would have been more impressed. There is no doubt that this speech was the turning point of the situation in the Punjab and was the biggest single factor that contributed to the swift return of Punjab to practical normalcy.

This was confirmed by the Editor of the Statesman. Ian Stephens who was by no means friendly to the Government at the time. He made a special tour of East Punjab and commented on the far-reaching effect. the speech and Sardar's dash to Amritsar had produced.

Thus the threat of an impending disaster which had been looming large over our heads had been removed. The orderly journey of the vast caravan of humanity on this side of the border had been assured. I am glad to say that Pakistan followed suit and incidents of interference with the progress of the caravans on the other side began to decline and finally were reduced to nil. In retrospect, I think it was the greatest achievement in the cause of peace between India and Pakistan.

The consequences of any major disaster to the caravans of either side were too terrible to contemplate. Not only would the two Punjabs have become engulfed in area-wide bloodshed but the situation would have certainly led to war and we would then have had a full-scale civil war of the pattern of the American Civil War. Hindus and Sikhs and Muslims would have come to blows, throughout northern India, if not elsewhere as well e.g. Bombay, Ahmedabad, Madhya Pradesh, Malabar Coast, Hyderabad etc. The stability of the Central Government would also have been seriously jeopardised. It is an irony of fate that the potentialities of such a situation should not have been realised all round, at least in the Cabinet, and it should have been left only to Sardar to think about it and evolve a heroic solution.

There are many sidelights to the events of those days which come to my mind as I write. Saradar's mind used to be so full of events that he would not get proper sleep; my own working hours had increased considerably, it was difficult to keep track of the normal work; still not a day's work remained in arrears. Barring the few hours of sleep we could manage to get, we worked round the clock. It was amazing to see an old man of seventy two years taking everything in his stride, never losing his temper even once, keeping a vigilant eye dealing with hundred of visitors with their conflicting counsels or harrowing tales of woe. On top of it all, he had to deal with the absorbing but deeply disturbing problem of

Junagadh where more or less, under his inspiration, direction and pressure a civil revolt occurred. A ring-fence operation had been successfully organised in Hyderabad which, despite the Prime Ministership of a nationalist like the Nawab of Chhatari, was defiant and thoublesome. The newly acquired problem of the Indian States, the evolution of the new All India service, the security of the entire country, the problem of refugees, the almost daily points of violent controvery between India and Pakistan, and the many issues of setting up a new administration after Partition and maintaining the threads of development—all continuend to claim his attention in addition to the emergency. He was not alone in this; Pandit Nehru also functioned in the same spirit and with the same zeal. But he was much younger and could have taken on the burden with much less loss of temper or flurry and with a greater balance of mind. But his methods and reactions were different; his preoccupations also did not involve the variety and details which come in Sardar's path; idealism and generalities are not what eat into the vitals of a frame: it is the complexities of variety and demand of details that weaken and enervate,

At the same time, unfortunately, the seeds of discord whitin the Cabinet began to take root and to germinate. These arose out of the incidents of August-September 1947 and also out of the general tenor of relations with Pakistan, the activities of the Supreme Command, the allocation and functioning of the newly created Department of Refugee Relief and Rehabilitation, issues arising out of foreign relations, the problem of refugees from East Pakistan, the repercussions of Partition, and policy towards religious bodies and institutions. So frayed were the tempers that even small things would provoke men like John Mathai. Once Sardar happened to write to him about a certain isolated problem of railway administration regarding the movement of refugees. Mathai, who was at that time fully aligned with and attuned to Pandit Nehru's ideas of managing things, reacted violently and virtually told Sardar to mind his own business—internal peace—rather than find fault with the working of other departments. Sardar reacted in a characteristic way. Rather than lose his temper, he gently gave the letter to me without a word and subsequently when he met Mathai he said 'You have obviously written it in a temper; I can be provoked into a temper and more easily than yon but I shall say nothing because I know you will have to regret it yourself.' Mathai listened to it gravely and said, 'I am sorry but the complaint you sent me was untrue and I felt that the whispers that go round affect you as well. I find I was mistaken.' There the matter ended but true, to Sardar's prophecy, Mathai lived to own a complete reversal of his views of Sardar and Pandit Nehru which he publicly expressed after relinquishing charge of the Finance Ministry in 1950, in a series of articles contributed to the *Times of India*. In fact the change did not take long to come; it was his powerful support at the time of the decision on Hyderabad Police Action that enabled Sardar to outvote Pandit Nehru.

Pandit Nehru also began to attempt to neutralise Sardar in the Cabinet.

The most significant step he took in this direction was the appointment of K.C. Neogy in independent charge of the Department of Rehabilitation. Originally the intention was to appoint a Ministor under Sardar so that the latter's undoubted talent for organisation, quick decisions and streamlined operations could be fully utilised to deal with one of the most difficult problems that faced the Government. The second was the appointment of Gopalaswamy Ayyangar as Minister Without Portfolio (Gopalaswamy was reported to be at the time a complete yes-man, a Brahman in South India, and such particularly suited for the role, but a turning point came in his relations with Sardar not long afterwards; he was also the one who strongly supported him in his policy towards the States and Hyderadad and greatly admired Sardar without it affecting his admiration for Panditji or approval of his policies). The third step was the constitution of some Cabinet Committees under his own Chairmanship (not one Committee was set up under the chairmanship of the Deputy Prime Minister though Lord Mountbatten in his letter of cogratulations to Sardar on that appointment on 14 August 1947 had expected increased responsibilities to be given to that office). I noticed that the gulf between the two was widening. These differences sometimes burst into the open in private and once or twice in public as well. Mischievous forces were at work, interested in creating a rift not only between Sardar and Pandit Nehru but also between Sardar and Gandhiji, not realising that it was baneful so far as the country was concerned.

It was during this period that Sardar and Pandit Nehru sent word to Gandhiji to come to Delhi but with different motives. Psycholgically, Pandit Nehru was in a sense, afraid of Sardar's influence and position; he had something of an inferiority complex. Whenever Sardar disposed of his long-worded arguments cryptically, Pandit Nehru was usually nonplussed and there was silent gap before he resumed his talk again. If Pandit Nehru had something to say which he thought would not be to Sardar's liking, he would be very circumspect, often circumlocutory, halting and hesitant and Sardar would see through it, somewhat amused. Since there were at this time, differences between the two, the strain in relations was accentuated. Sardar on his part sensed it; he also knew how busy the mischief-makers were. He sometime used to despair and be despondent. Often he was in anguish. He tried to console himself and manage through correspondence but found it not so rewarding. He also needed support and to whom could he turn better than to his preceptor. So Gandhiji was persuaded to come; he himself found Sardar in a different mood and openly and publicly so. He soon realised the gravity of the situation but then things were destined to turn out differently and tragically.

During the time the disturbed situation prevailed in Delhi and its environs, despite his preoccupations, Sardar gave signal proof of the high standard of real secularism and genuine fellow-feeling he set for himself. Shortly after these troubles began, the Nawab of Bhopal, by no means a

persona grata in Sardar's camp, rang up Sardar to say that he had not heard from his son-in-law, the late *Nawab* of Pataudi, the famous cricketer, as all means of communication had failed, and was greatly concerned about his welfare. He wanted to get some news of him as his daughter, the *Begum* who was in Delhi was also anxious and apprehensive. Sardar told him that he would attend to it himself. The *Nawab* told him not to bother about it himself, as he well realised the absorbing state of his preoccupations, but to ask me to do so as I knew both him and his son-in-law. But Sardar would have none of it. He asked me immediately to contact the *Begum* of Pataudi and make arrangements for a visit to Pataudi. I was rather nervous. The area was disturbed; forces of disorder and ultra-conservatism were active and there might be difficulties. Sardar would not, however, change his mind; to quote the Urdu Poet:

> Brave men do not turn their faces against the flood of troubles; a lion swims straight when he enters the flooded waters.
>
> (*Phirta hai saile hawadis se kahin mardon ka munh Sher seedha tairta hai waqte raftan aab men*)

I made arrangements for the journey and took the nocesssary security precautions. We had to go by car (which meant a motorcade) to Palam, take a military rail-car and escorting vehicle to Pataudi Road and then cars to the Nawab's Palace. Everything went on perfectly. We reached the Palace and were very happy to find the *Nawab* safe and sound, surrounded by a host of his co-religionists whom he had brought to his Palace premises, a haven of safety from the neighbouring villages. Sardar embraced the *Nawab* and after enquiring of his welfere and the situation tried to persuade him to return to Delhi. But the *Nawab* thankfully declined, having decided to share the perils with his comrades. His loving wife fully supported him and declared her determination to stay with him. Finding arguments useless against a cricketer's determined stand and a beautiful lady's firm resolve, he sent for the leading villagers from the neighbouring villages, pledged them to the security and safety of the family and the Muslims gathered there, made arrangements for their protection and transmission of news of their well-being and then left the place amid touching scenes of *au revoir* and affection. The neighbours honoured the pledge and after arranging for the departure of such of them as wanted to leave for Pakistan, the family shifted to Delhi. Sardar, on return, immediately conveyed the news to the *Nawab* who was both relieved and immensely grateful.

Similarly, one morning he heard from the *Pir* in charge of *Dargah* Nizamuddin that threats had been held out against the safety of the shrine by miscreants. This was soon after Safdarjang Hospital had been subjected to a raid in which not even the Muslim patients were spared and there was a state of panic among the hundreds of men, women and children who resided in the vicinity of the *Dargah* or had flocked to its safety. I was

greatly disturbed; I held the *Dargah* in veneration and realised its importance. Sardar noticed my discomfiture and turned to me to enquire about the place. I told him briefly where it was and about its sanctity, repeating the famous anecdote of a meeting between the Saint and King Ghiyasuddin Tughlak. He wrapped his shawl round his neck and said, 'Let us go to the Saint before we incur his displeasure.' We had to take security precautions and arrived there unostentatiously and unobtrusively. Sardar spent a good fortyfive minutes in the precincts, visited the holy shrine where he went round in an attitude of veneration, made inquiries here and there of the inmates and then left after making arrangements for its safety. He told the Police officer in charge of the area, on pain of dismissal, that he would hold him and his men responsible if any thing untoward happened to the *Dargah* and that if he found any such situation threatening he was to let me know at once. I am sure it was this visit that saved the *Dargah* and the thousands of Muslim living under its protective shelter, from a disastrous fate.

During the period that the Delhi disturbances were at their worst, Sardar made a round of the city. The memory of that visit will live with me for ever. I was a mournful witness of ghastly scenes, laying bare before me the bestiality and brutality of man. Men of all ages, their throats slashed, backs stabbed, and necks severed ; women with vermilion marks lying exposed to wind and weather, their bodies decomposing, their mouths twisted in horror, but their complexions still showing some signs of freshness; babes in arms, probably just taken out of their cradles; little children snatched away from their play and boys and girls in their teens lying about like withered buds which the desert air smothered into shrunken and twisted shapes--all these ungainly sights confronted us everywhere. It was clear that this mass killing had been organised on both sides and the battle of retaliation went on like that of the giants who struggled for existence in the primaeval forests of the Amazon. The motorcade veered its way through Paharganj, Sadar Bazar, Sabzimandi, Pul Bangash, Karolbagh and other parts of old Delhi amid these unprecedented scenes of horror; the only experience I had gone through, faintly recalling the spirit of these scenes, was the visit to the Chambar of Horrors in Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London but there they were individual murders and all were mere figurative representations; the only parallel scenes I could think of at the time were those described in history books relating to the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, and my grandfather's description of the events during the 1857 Mutiny. But the lifelessness of the one, the cold print of the second, and the past tense of the third were in strange contrast to the human nature 'red in tooth and claw' spread out before me. The visit culminated in a short stay at Faiz Bazar Police Station where, as soon as Sardar and I alighted from the jeep, two bullets in quick succession whizzed past us—barely a foot away from us. They came from the neighbouring '*Dawn*' building, a Muslim stronghold. The police and the Army units at the station came to

know of it and wanted to retaliate immediately but Sardar did not allow it and asked them to attend to their duties without being upset about it. After a short conference with the local officers, Sardar returned to his house immersed in deep thought. He telephoned the Chief Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, instructing them to ensure that the corpses were disposed of, in order to avoid pollution and the outbreak of epidemic, and to strengthen security measures. I think that this round of the city accelerated the pace of the return of normalcy to Delhi.

Sardar believed in action rather than indulging in mere discussions. V.P. Menon in his book 'The Transfer of Power in India,' described how C.H. Bhabha, Commerce Minister of the time, convened a meeting at his residence when a plan for dealing with the situation was worked out more or less on the lines of what was already being done. While the meeting was on, a report of certain incidents was received. H.M. Patel and V.P. Menon left to meet Sardar. While they were having these discussions some other reports were received, including the murder of a Muslim not very far from Sardar's residence. V.P, Menon then describes how, in a voice charged with the deepest emotion Sardar exclaimed 'What is the point of waiting and discussing here; why don't you all get on with the business and do something, and do what you think is right. 'This was typical of Sardar's method of work. He would lay the general out lines or approve of the general approach and leave it to his trusted men to carry out the policies. It is not as if he left them free afterwards; his curiosity for information was insatiable and demand for reports inexorable. We had to render a daily account of our doings; so had the Ministers in Delhi and Chief Ministers in Provincial capitals.

To illustrate my point, I give one typical example of his method of arriving at quick decisions, thereby economising his time, saving himself from needless work and displaying unusual trust in a subordinate. There was an important disciplinary case which I discussed with him. He and I differed in our approach and conclusion. Finally he gave a decision which was contrary to my way of thinking. I then asked him what arguments I should give in support of his decision. He turned to me with a smile and said, 'It is your job to find the arguments. You are intelligent enough for it.' I kept quite and took the papers to my room, reflected on the case, fell in completely with the decision and found arguments which latter carried conviction with everyone concerned.

Sardar was not content with mere visits to Delhi. He visited other places as well. I remember vividly his visit to the East Punjab towns and particularly Patiala and its environs, just before *Nawab* Iftikharuddin visited the area. Wherever he went he was distressed by the scenes of carnage that met his eyes. He exhorted the administrators and Rulers to ensure that law and order returned to the entire countryside and that the area was saved from pollution and disease. In doing this, the Rulers with their authority and resources (they had their own State forces at the time) were more successful than the administrators who had not yet settled

down in their work. The work of the Ruler of Patiala was particularly praise-worthy. The manner in which he assured the safety of Rosa Sharif, a Muslim shrine of great holiness and sanctity, and the neighbouring areas of Malerkotla, must always redound to his credit It was largely due to these visits of Sardar that peace and order at last returned to the disturbed areas of East Punjab and the neighbouring States. Sardar consolidated this achievement in his two speeches at Patiala—one at the Panthic Conference in the Durbar Hall and the other at the mass public meeting on 22 October, 1947. I quote from these speeches the following extracts respectively:

> But you are a brave people and you must face the situation like brave men. It does not behove the brave to besmirch the honour of their swords and the fair name of their community and country by spilling innocent blood. The time is for calm and dispassionate thinking over your future course of action and for wisely so shaping your conduct as to bring glory to that community and your country, and not for bemoaning your fate or counting your losses and vainly hoping to make up for them by retaliation. The Sikh community has been misrepresented and vilified abroad by certain interested propagandists. You have to rehabilitate your reputation which you built up during the two World Wars. For that it is enough to wield the sword, but to know how to use it. These propagandists are concentrating on maligning Sikhs.
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> There is another set of propagandists which is bent on isolating Sikhs and creating divisions between Hindus and Sikhs and propagating that it would now be a conflict between Sikhs and Hindus. This set is more hostile than the first. The latter is only creating a legend to serve to revive old imperialist justification for foreign rule in India. The former are, however, enemies both within our ranks and without. They must be guarded against and their propaganda given a lie to.
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> When we accepted division, it was like ourselves agreeing to have a diseased limb amputated so that the remaining may live in a sound conditions. But before we could start the process of healing events have overtaken us. Evil cannot be met by evil, but by good. Although we cannot act in entire accord with the creed of non-violence in the imperfect state of mental and moral equipment which is necessary for that purpose, we cannot act in such manner as to degrade the sword which we weild. When the right time and the right cause come, you can use your sword to your hearts content. Now you have to sheathe your sword so that you can raise the moral tone of the people which is now at such low ebb that lawlessness,contempt for law, attacks on innocent train passengers and brutalities on helpless persons are being perpetrated. It is up to all of us to check that tendency and you can give the right lead in the matter. We must create the right atmosphere in which we can achieve our cherished objectives of raising the status

and the standard of living of the people. We must resuscitate our moral sense which seems to have been dulled by the prejudices and anger which cloud our minds. Unless we rise above such prejudices and anger, we can never achieve all that we fought the struggle for freedom for. I appeal to you to cultivate a proper sense of moral value. I ask you to do a little heart-searching. We can only advise you, but you can act on that advice only according to your capacity. If you are selfless workers, you will get your reward. But if you become involved in mutual jealousies and internecine quarrels, you can only do damage to the cause which you profess to uphold. When we achieved Independence, it was with a view to carving out for India a place in the world polity, and to raising the stature and the standard of living of the people. Instead, we find ourselves fully preoccupied with the task of meeting the most gigantic problem of refugee relief that has ever faced man in human history.

This is not the time to involve ourselves in needless disputes, nor can we ever afford to follow the mirage of many 'sthans' like Khalistans and Sikhistans or Jatisthans. If we are not careful and become a prey to these inimical ideas, we can only succeed in turning India into a *paglistan* (land of lunatics). It is, therefore, up to you to forget your mutual quarrels and behave with a sense of responsibility and in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. We have formidable tasks before us. Attacks on railways, looting and the part which sometimes even the military and the police play in such incidents merely show that we are face to face with moral bankruptcy which, if not checked, must mean downfall and ruin.

Remember, if a hungry man dies of starvation, he dies without a stain on his honour. But one who steals to feed himself virtually suffers from living death. He has not followed the path of honour and glory, but that of shame and disgrace. If we want popular government, we must build up popular support and strength. Princes want respect and reverence. They will gracefully yield to popular demands if they find that a sense of responsibility and popular support prompts the popular organizations. I, therefore, ask such organizations to work selflessly and in a spirit of public service and thereby earn not only the gratitude of the people but also the confidence of the Rulers and achieve the object which is neither inimical to the interests of the Princes, nor inconsistent with their responsibilities. For, after all, no Prince can afford to treat popular support with contumely nor popular grievances with impunity.

In a month's time, thanks largely to Sardar's efforts, a position had had been reached in which he could change his tune from plea and appeal to the need for self-introspection and admonition and shift the topic from a threatened blood-bath to matters which constituted the problem of setting our own house in order. In a sense it was a radical transfor-

mation of the scene as only those who were its witnesses can understand today after twenty-five years. The contemporary newspapers records, of which I have given only one instance, would bear witness to the alteration of the picture in the Punjab. What was even more important was that the Sikhs had begun to experience the glow and warmth of another leadership. They began to turn their minds from the problems of blood and tears to those of seeking a new and happier life in new homes and surroundings. The manner in which those brave and enterprising scions of the Punjab have rehabilitated themselves completely, have contributed tremendously to the building of a new Punjab, and spread all over India and even abroad, must be admired by even the most prosaic soul.

In strange contrast to the situation in the West was the position in the East. Partition had done grievous injury to the Bengalis. The land of their language and culture, the proud joint heritage of both Hindus and Muslims, had been subjected to division. The division had torn asunder families and their properties; particularly dastardly was the loss of Khulna District to the Hindus and Calcutta to the Muslims. The Bengali Hindu and Muslim were never nearer to each other than the Punjabi Hindu and Sikh on one side, and Muslim on the other. Gandhiji's stay in Noakhali, though not as fruitful as was anticipated, had served some purpose in bringing the two communities together. The absence of disturbance in the area after Partition and a small trickle of refugees from East Pakistan following it were ample proof of the changed atmosphere. Gandhiji's presence in Calcutta seemed to be a stabilising factor and there was considerable fraternisation between the two communities on 15 August 1947. But the development in the west had their inevitable repercussions and a recrudescence of communal trouble occurred after a few weeks. Gandhiji reacted swiftly and with the collaboration of Mr. H.S. Suhrawardy succeeded in taking the edge off the trouble. But stabbings and other crimes continued even through not on a large scale. Immedialely Gandhiji undertook a fast 'to end only if and when sanity returned to the city'. The response of the two communities was equally quick. Within three days the situation returned to normal. Even the police force was deeply affected and resorted to a twentyfour hour fast in sympathy whilst still on duty—an unprecedented act on the part of a police force anywhere. Thus, to quote the words of Lord Mountbatten 'a one man boundary force' had 'kept the peace while a 50,000 stong force was swamped by riots'. The miracle had been achieved, recalling a much earlier but not so successful fast which Gandhiji had undertaken in Delhi years ago for bringing about communal peace, and a later one which had such a tragic sequel in his own death. Fate writes with different ink at different times; it writes in shining white in similar circumstances to those in which it writes in red on other occasions. It moves unobtrusively from one to the other regardless of the virtues of consistency and constancy.

Nine

Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir

WHILE THE holocaust continued in western parts of India, there were other developments elsewhere. One after the other, and sometimes simultaneously, the problems of Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir raised their heads and Sardar had to take them all in this stride. These were the States which had not acceded to India, in which the League and Pakistan were playing their own game, and in every one of which a situation developed which brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war. Lord Mountbatten was determined to avert this possibility apart from other consideration; such an eventuality would have made his position and that of the British officer serving the two Dominions very embarrassing. In a predicaments such as this the bully naturally takes the upper hand. Pakistan's hectorly tactics were fully in evidence in the correspondence that passed between the two Prime Ministers and the two Governments or the public statements that were issued by leaders in Pakistan, including Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan. Such statements, letters and telegrams tried to defend the indefensible e.g. the accession of Junagadh to Pakistan, and were designed to continue the Muslim Rule of Junagadh and Hyderabad. They were intended to appeal to the Communal feelings of the Muslim population in the three States and incite them either, as in the case of Junagadh and Hyderabad to fight for their privileged position or, as in the case of Kashmir, to assert their majority rights.

Sardar's attitude in regard to those States was clear, unambiguous and forcefully expressed. He decided not only to resist the moves of Pakistan to expand its hegemony in the Junagadh area but also to oust it from that area. Hyderabad, which he called an 'ulcer in the abdomen of India' must accede to the Indian Dominion like the other States on the three subjects of Defence, Communications and External Affairs. Kashmir's future must be determined by the Ruler himself on a consideration of the relevant factors and if such decision was against India he would abide by it. He had put no pressure on the previous Prime Minister, Ram Chandra Kak, nor was he prepared to do so on Justice Mehar Chand Mahajan, who had recently become Prime Minister. He had even gone to the extent of declining to conclude a standstill agreement though offered by the Prime Minister, Sir Janak Singh, feeling that until a road link had been established he would not be able effectively to implement such an arrangement. He, however, did authorise, on his own, the then Chief Engineer, B.S. Puri,

to improve the condition of the Madhopur-Kathua Road so as to provide such a link. The work was taken in hand and substantial progress had been made by the time we were over taken by the events of October 1947, for which responsibility rests squarely on Pakistan.

What led Pakistan to accept the accession of Junagadh to that country must remain a matter of speculation. The most plausible interpretation which seemed to appeal to Sardar appears to be that Pakistan wanted to use Junagadh as a bargaining levers so that if the Ruler of Kashmir acceded to India, notwithstanding the majority Muslim population, Pakistan could justify the accession of Junagadh and thereby acquire a foothold in an area with which it could maintain sea and air communications. The accession of Hyderabad would have followed suit. Then by raising an internal revolt in Jammu and Kashmir by the Muslims of the State and given them armed assistance, it could gradually acquire that State as well. With Pakistan's forces stationed in Jammu and Kashmir, acquiring a foothold in Saurashtra and the accession of Hyderabad, Pakistan would have acquired a position of strength from which it could constitute a perpetual threat to the whole of India. Such a situation today appears remote but loomed large at that time and it was Sardar's constant aim and endeavour to avert it.

The position was difficult in the extreme. The Kashmir Ruler was not in a position to make up his mind, the sympathies of the Nizam of Hyderabad, as also those of the Ruling clique there were unmistakable. But for its geographical situation they would perhaps have taken a definite stand and asserted themselves. The Ruler of Junagadh took a definite stand against India, ignoring all relevant factors. So far as Sardar was concerned, he was not willing to let Hyderabod take a different line from the rest of the States which had accepted accession. These states included Bhopal, though the *Nawab* had made no secret of his anti-Indian attitude and pro-Pakistan sympathies—in fact, he harboured the ambition of being the Governor-General of Pakistan at one time. His trusted colleague, Shoaib Qureshi, a one time nationalist, was working behind the scenes in Pakistan, to that end. As regards Kashmir, Sardar was prepared to wait. But he had to contend with two important factors, one of them being Lord Mountbatten. Lord Monntbatten was clearly anxious to solve all these problems through conciliation and peaceful means and in the process he evolved formula after formula with an ingenuity which often irritated Sardar, though he did not show his chagrin. Sardar had to be particularly patient because very often Lord Mountbatten succeeded in enlisting Pandit Nehru's sympathies for his point of view. Sardar by nature and temperament, abhorred any method except the direct one. He was convinced that, in this matter of supreme national importance, police action could not be ruled out in the case of Hyderabad and that the threat of its accession to Pakistan must be removed at all costs. As regards Junagadh, he was not prepared for any compromise and finally succeeded in evolving and executing his own plans despite Lord Mountbatten's counsels against

precipitating matters or his suggestion of a plebiscite;

Sardar first dealt with the fringes of Junagadh. Soon it was surrounded by small States which had acceded to India; the *Arzi Hukamat*, under Samaldas Gandhi, took charge of these Junagadh States; and finally the administration was brought to a standstill to such an extent that the Dewan, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, a Pakistani, felt that discretion was the better part of valour and handed over the administration to Indian hands, after informing Jinnah and Ikramulla, Secretary, Ministry of Food & Agriculture and Commonwealth Relations, Pakistan. Accordingly, he wrote a letter to the Regional Commissioner at Rajkot on 8 Nevember 1947 asking him to take over the administration of the State. The news was communicated to Delhi late at night. Sardar was woken up to hear the news. His joy knew no bounds but he was somewhat disturbed at the suggestion made by the Menon of settling the future of Junagadh in accordance with the wishes of the people. He saw Lord Mountbatten's hand in this formula but reconciled himself to the wording since it avoided a reference to U.N. auspices. When I argued with him the next morning against even the mention of the wishes of the people since the administration itself had broken down—a clear proof of popular pressure on the Dewan—he remarked with a twinkle in his eye: 'Don't you see we have two U.N. experts—one the Prime Minister and the other Lord Mountbatten—and I have to steer my way between them. However, I have my own ideas of a plebiscite. You wait and see'. Finally, a referendum was held in February, 1948 under the supervision of C.B. Nagarkar, a Bombay Judge, and the people voted almost *neem con* for accession to India. The Pakistani Prime Minister however, refused to reconcile himself to the situation but after an angry exchange of telegrams, the matter was not pursued even though the dispute continued to figure on the U.N. Agenda.

Hyderabad, however, taxed the patience and resources of Sardar in full measure. In the first place, Hyderabad occupied a special position in the British scheme of things and therefore touched a special chord in Lord Mountbatten. The 'faithful ally' concept still ruled the attitude of every Britisher of importance. Secondly, being the largest State and ruled by a Muslim aristocracy, educated, cultured and, on the whole, quite advanced, it was not an easy task to handle the affairs of this State without evoking communal passions on either side. Thirdly, its geographical position and the character of its population were such that any unpleasant situation was bound to affect the neighbouring provinces of Bombay, Madras, and Central Provinces and Berar, and the State of Mysore. Fourthly, in the larger context it was a test case for Sardar, for all the other Rulers were watching whether the Indian Government would concede to it a position different from that of the other States which had acceded on three subjects, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. Lastly, on Hyderabad, Pandit Nehru and some others in Delhi were prepared to take a special line; in this Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Miss Padmaja Naidu, both of whom occupied a special position in Pandit Nehru's esteem, were not

without influence. There were also forces which were not slow or hesitant to point out the special position of the Muslims in the State, particularly their culture and position of power and prestige and which were prepared to compromise the all-India position in order to pacify their sentiments. Even V.P. Menon would sometimes succumb to these softer feelings though when he did take the paramount all-India considerations, he was as tough as any one could be.

Those who have read V.P. Menon's account of negotiations with Hyderabad—the account is by and large authentic though it misses many personal angles—will appreciate Sardar's difficulties in dealing with Hyderabed in his usual direct manner. The main difficulty was that partly due to Menon's persuasion, partly due to Pandit Nehru's preference for softer methods and partly in view of the special circumstances mentioned, Sardar allowed Lord Mountbatten to have a great deal of say in the negotiations and even to take a leading hand in them Apart from Lord Mountbatten's understandable sympathy for the Muslim position in Hyderabad, shared by Pandit Nehru, in anything that concerned Pakistan even indirectly, he was for compromise and conciliation to the maximum extent possible, in order to prevent a confrontation, at least during his time. The *Nizam* had selected Sir Walter Monckton, a leading British lawyer of his day, as his Constitutional and Legal Adviser in these matters; Monckton wielded considerable influence over Lord Mountbatten, both personally and politically. Lord Mountbatten was very keen to avoid any complications regarding his position with Winston Churchill and his political associates. His choice of Lord Ismay as a member of his staff was influenced by the consideration that this would enable him to keep up his links with the Conservative Party, notwithstanding the fact that it was the Labour Government which had selected him for the Indian Viceroyalty. This was particularly so since he knew he might have to adopt lines in India which might not fit in with Churchill's way of looking at the Indian problem. Winston Churchill's position regarding Hyderabad was well-known; how could a champion of the Empire desert its faithful ally? All these factors placed the Hyderabad problem in a state of flux but nothing made the problem so confusing as the attitude of the Ruler who despite his shrewdness, intelligence and culture, alternated between Machiavellian tactics and cowardice and could not take a direct stand.

Sardar was aware of the influence which Lord Mountbatten exercised over both Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji; often that influence was decisive. He also had appreciated Lord Mountbatten's tact, diplomacy and capabilities, but he could not always see eye to eye with him and at times held diametrically opposed view. Sardar had made up his mind that Hyderabad must fit into his policy regarding the Indian States. In Hyderabad itself, the opinion of the Ruler, his advisers and the Ruling clique, was in favour of Independence, if possible, or a diluted from of it. All the delegations that came from Hyderabad and the various negotiations which

Lord Mountbatten conducted had to face this great divergence between the two positions ; Lord Mountbatten strove hard and used all his ingenuity to bridge this gap of the 'Great Divide' but in vain. Well before his failure, however, Sardar made several attempts to force the issue but as long as Lord Mountbatten was there, he could not succeed; it was only after he left that he could take action.

The story [has been told chronologically in V. P. Menon's book on the Integration of States and it is not my purpose to repeat that account. I would only point out that at different stages Sardar had to moderate his line in order to achieve unanimity and, as he put it once, 'to give a long enough rope to the *Nazam* to hang himself.' I know how deeply anguished he used to feel at his helplessness in settling the problem with his accustomed swiftness. The issue was complicated by the regular contacts of the *Nizam* with Pakistan, viz. Ghulam Mohamed's visit to Hyderabad, the advice he used to seek from Jinnah, the loan which was given by Hyderabad to Pakistan, the visits of prominent Hyderabadis to Karachi, the migrations that were taking place from Hyderbad to Pakistan, the regular line of communication which Sidney Cotton had established between Karachi and Hyderabad in his gun-running mission and the attempts which Pakistan was making to have a finger in the Hyderabad pie. The patience and resourcefulness of the leading negotiators survived all these in the pathetic hope that all's well that ends well. Formula after formula was devised to meet the situation and, as always happens in such formula-hunting activities, it was Indian interests which were compromised. Sardar, to whom the sacrifice of Indian interests was anathema, had to struggle against all these, often only to give in here and there, and found it all a painful and distressing experience. He helplessly submitted, but entertained the hope that one day they would all have to agree that there was no way out except to adopt a drastic course.

The resort to methods of conciliation put a premium on intransigence. This is clear from the composition of the various delegations sent by the *Nizam*; they got progressively worse from the point of veiw of reaching an understanding in line with the general policy towards the Indian States. The first delegation led by the *Nawab* of Chhatari was definitely more inclined to reconciliation of the different points of view than the later Moin Nawaz Jung Delegation. Laik Ali proved more obdurate than the latter and the final negotiations that ended in a breakdown were really conducted on an individual basis in which unfortunately, both Lord Mountbatten and Monckton were led up the garden path and even V.P. Menon succumbed to an exercise in formula-hunting in the fond belief that some common understanding, even at the sacrifice of some essential principles, might be reached. There was however one advantage out of this progressively deteriorating position from the all-India point of veiw, and that was that Sardar began to take a progressively more tough line and even Pandit Nehru realised that there was a limit beyond which concessions could not be made. The last attempt by Lord Mountbatten

to arrange terms between the Indian Dominion and Hyderabad, a few days before his departure to the U.K. in June 1948 was a pathetic one. Purely on personal grounds, he wrested from Sardar a reluctant agreement to a formula which he thought would do the trick or, in fact, work a miracle; he had visions of a dash to Hyderabad and a banquet when a sort of 'entente cordiale' could be celebrated. Sardar was waiting anxiously at Dehra Dun to see if his gamble would come off, though he nursed a secret hope that the *Nizam* would refuse and a breakdown would ensue. Eventually, Sardar, much to his own relief, proved correct and the die was cast with Lord Mountbatten's departure.

There are interesting sidelights of the personalities involved, which are worthy of note. There is no doubt that the Hyderabad Delegations served their masters well. The Chhatari Delegation served the *Nizam*; others, led by Qasim Razvi and Laik Ali, served both the *Nizam* and the *Ittehad*. Qasim Ali struck me as a fanatical firebrand and Laik Ali as a typically vain and diehard type who could never be expected to see any point of view but his own. He cams in for quite a lot of plain speaking by Sardar every time he met him. At times Laik Ali did exhibit signs of nervousness but otherwise he felt quite confident that eventually with Pakistan's help, the exaggerated picture of Hyderabad's military strength so sedulously fostered by the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, would prevail. He thought that the high opinion which Lord Mountbatten and General Bucher, the Commander-in-Chief, held of El Edroos, the Commander-in-Chief of the Hyderabad Army, and the bluff and bluster which he and the *Ittehadis* could indulge in, would bring the Indian Dominion round to meeting the Hyderabad point of view in essentials. Moin Nawaz Jung, who led the post-Chhatari Delegations was a fellow traveller of Laik Ali in thought, word and deed. The duplicity with which he behaved over the loan to Pakistan was of a piece with his performance in the negotiations. As V.P. Menon has mentioned, neither he nor Laik Ali had any qualms about going back upon their word. In fact, in retrospect, I am somewhat puzzled as to how a shrewd military leader like Lord Mountbatten could be misled by these persons and believe that he could settle matters by conciliation and negotiations.

Another fact which has to be borne in mind is that the negotiations were held under conditions of great stress. The first standstill agreement was signed in November 1947, that is not only when we had experienced the blood-bath and its aftermath but also when India had been stabbed in back by Pakistan in Junagadh and we had become involed in Jammu and Kashmir. It was fortunate that agreement had a clause regarding the appointment of an Agent-General and Sardar's choice fell on K. M. Munshi. Munshi was not acceptable with Pandit Nehru and was not exactly popular with Lord Mountbatten but he fitted remarkably well into Sardar's scheme of things. Sardar wanted a resourceful and intelligent man like him on the spot and with his background as a successfull Home Minister of Bombay, he thought Munshi would fill the role with distinction.

The appointment was, therefore, made and Munshi carried out his task remarkably well. He might have been a nuisance to the Nizam and his supporters but that was to be expected. He was not there to woo them and could hardly be popular with them. But he kept up the morale of the non-Muslim population of the State and posted Sardar with the latest events in his own inimitable style and incisive analysis. He had to pay the penalty for doing so by living in very irksome conditions and uncongenial surroundings and having to wind up his mission under painful circumstances culminating in ill-health.

It must also not be forgotten that Hyderabad did not, in fact, take any serious steps to implement the agreement and fully exploited the difficulties of the Indian Dominion, consequential, firstly, to Gandhiji's assassination and subsequently to Sardar's own serious illness. In fact, Sardar conducted some of the difficult interviews with Laik Ali from his bed while convalescing and we all had to watch him with anxiety, as it was impossible for him to avoid getting angry and excited.

Qasim Razvi, he had met, while still in good health. I have a vivid recollections of that interview. Qasim Razvi with his fanatical eyes rolling in their sockets and sporting a beard like that of a *Mullah* had about forty five minutes with Sardar in which he maintained Hyderabad's position with strength and vigour but received short shrift from Sardar. Sardar told him in no uncertain terms that he was leading his men on the wrong path and that nothing but disillusionment and disaster awaited them. I have seldom seen Sardar so worked up as he was during that interview and subsequently in April when Laik Ali met him and received a real hiding. Despite his illness, Sardar was a master of himself and the situation. It is remarkable how, despite his age—he was seventy-three years—and the serious attack of thrombosis, Sardar was able to deal with such delicate issues in a skilful and concentrated manner. After those discussions, Sardar's mind was finally and irrevocably made up. He felt that events were gradually but unmistakably progressing towards a confrontation.

I would also like to record that Sardar was so vigilant about the situation in Hyderabad that, apart from the official sources of information and the reports he received from the Provincial Governments concerned and the Chief Ministers, he had established his own sources of information—some of them in the higher counsels of the *Nizam*. Through these and Munshi he was up-to-date with complete and authentic reports on what was happening in the State and this made him a very difficult adversary to contend with. His rapport with the Hyderabad Congress was good the leading lights being Swami Ramanand Tirtha and Shri Ramakrishna Rao, who later became Chief Minister of Hyderabad and Governor of Kerala and U.P. Although Shri Ramakrishna Rao had somewhat discredited himself by joining, at one time, the *Nizam's* Executive Council, we found him generally taking a balanced view of things. All of them had faith and confidence in the Sardar and left things to him, though they were

naturally and understandably impatient of developments in view of the atrocities being perpetrated by the *Razakars* and other anti-social elements in the States.

The *Razakars* were a militant organisation with a fanatical outlook and a blind faith in their leader, Qasim Razvi. Their creed was Muslim domination in Hyderabad and their sympathies unmistakably lay with Pakistan. Fiery speeches on the part of their leaders used to drive them into a state of frenzy, somewhat reminiscent of the scenes I witnessed in Berlin and Munich in 1938 when Hitler was working up the moods and emotions of Germans against Czechoslovakia. They had a free run of the whole State and proved themselves so strong as to influence the *Nizam* in disregarding the advice of men like *Nawab* of Chhatari, Sultan Ahmed, Mirza Ismail and even Sir Walter Monckton. From every point of view the activities of this organisation were inimical to a state of harmony and peace between the Indian Dominion and the State of Hyderabad. It is not as if the *Nizam* was a helpless tool in their hands. To my mind, he was so obsessed by the idea of his own independence and so convinced of the strength of his own position and the need for Muslim domination that he submitted to, if not welcomed, their activities when he could have dealt with them with a firm hand. A proof of his innermost feelings is furnished by Alan Campbell Johnson in his account of the visit to Hyderabad in the middle of May 1948. He even cited the martyrdom of Hassan and Hussain obviouly implying that if it came to that he would be reconciled to it. In the process he was even reconciled to a dangerous situation developing as a result of Qasim Razvi's friendship with him. The methods of the *Razakars* were ruthless and their practices revolting. After the failure of the negotiations in June, 1948, therefore, it was only a question of time when a major operation should be performed. The entire staff for the purpose had been alerted and the timing depended on how long it would take for Sardar to overcome the resistance to this course by C. Rajagopalachari who succeeded Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General and by Pandit Nehru, who found in Rajagopalachari an intellectual support for his non-violent policy towards Hyderabad.

I have already indicated earlier how Sardar's mind was made up about Hyderabad. It was not that this was a sudden transformation, as might appear to those who merely looked superficially at the developments, particularly the manner in which Sardar outwardly diluted his views to suit Lord Mountbatten and V.P. Menon's handling of the situation. There were occasions when he did not hesitate to give in public his real views about Hyderabad— views which ultimately prevailed. For instance, speaking at a meeting with the Indian and foreign journalists in Delhi on 29 January 1948 after the unification of Kathiawad States, he said:

> One State remains which is still causing us some anxiety. It is the State of Hyderabad. Its geographical situation, the composition of its

people and its cultural and traditional ties with India are such that it cannot but be an integral part of India tied to it by the same bonds which characterise the relationship today between India and the acceding States. Accession in the case of Hyderabad is inevitable and will, I hope, come before long. Similarly, democratisation cannot be delayed or withheld in Hyderabad. The people there must get their due and I would only appeal to H.E.H. the Nizam to appreciate this situation and to do the right thing in time.

Even earlier, at Junagadh on 13 November 1947, before the negotiations for a standstill agreement had been finalised, he said:

> If Hyderabad is to be saved, it must effect a radical change in its methods and policy. In the world of today, only those who have guts can make their voice felt. If Hyderabad wishes to be heard, it must follow bravely and courageously the popular will. Otherwise, Hyderabad's fate will sooner or later be the same as those of other rulers and dynasties who had attempted to thwart the popular will only at the cost of their existance.

He was even more forthright in his speech at Patiala, at the time of the inauguration of PEPSU (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) on 15 July 1948 when he said:

> Many have asked me the question what is going to happen to Hyderabad. They forget that when I spoke at Junagadh, I said openly that if Hyderabad did not behave properly, it would have to go the way Junagadh did. The words still stand and I stand by these words. The former Governor-General, Lord Mountbatten, thought that he would be able to secure a peaceful settlement. I let him do so. He tried his best. The Nizam used to pride himself in being called 'His Majesty's Faithful Ally'. Britishers feel that that gives them some right to approach the Nizam and make sincere efforts to win him round to the path of sanity and peace. It was in this spirit that Lord Mountbatten, assisted by Sir Walter Monckton, hoped to the last to be able to secure by negotiations what they felt Hyderabad must offer to India and India must offer to Hyderabad. Although I was doubtful whether the efforts would succeed, I let them try. But although up to the last Lord Mountbatten was hopeful of a settlement, that hope never materialised owing to the intransigence of the Nizam and fanaticism of the forces at his back. But I should like to make one thing clear. The terms and the talks which Lord Mountbatten had, have gone with him. Now the settlement with the Nizam will have to be on the lines of other settlements with the States.

Thus Sardar's views which were already quite strong in November 1947 had begun to stiffen in January 1948; but after the failure of Lord

Mountbatten's mission they had crystallised into a need for action. In fact, by that time the word had gone to the Armed Forces and the Provinces to be ready for a confrontation and take-over of the administration if need be.

It was about this time and after Lord Mountbatten's departure that two events in Britain stung Sardar to the quick. One was the debate in Parliament in which R.A. Butler (now Lord Butler) chose to refer to Hyderabad in the most inappropriate context of foreign affairs. The other was a very highly coloured aid explosive speech of Winston Churchill, Leader of His Majesty's Opposition, in which he attacked India and the Indian leaders generally and with particular reference to Hyderabad. Sardar was then at Dehra Dun resting after his severe heart attack. I vividly remember the occasion. He read an account of Churchill's speech in The Hindustan Times round about 10 a.m. when the newspapers used to be received in Dehra Dun. He then called me and I found him very excited and agitated. He gave me the copy of the newspaper and said 'Have you seen this one' (pointing to the portion dealing with Churchill's speech). I told him I had. 'What do you think of it', he asked. I said that it was a bad thing and doubted whether at any time in British history a Dominion Government had been dealt with by no less a person than the Leader of the Opposition in such a fashion. I did not realise that I had added fuel to the fire. The result was virtually a conflagration.

After a pause, during which his face had visibly flushed and eyes had assumed a militant spark, he said: 'We must reply to it at once.' I said that it might be better to do so in a cooler frame of mind. He looked at me angrily and asked if by now I had not sensed the value he attached to time and tempo. Sheepishly I kept quite and asked him what his instructions were. He told me to draft a rejoinder and for a couple of hours we discussed the line it should take. By that time the lunch hour came to be followed by his usual afternoon siesta. He told me to keep the draft ready by the time he woke up. I enquired if we need be in such a hurry as a reply to Churchill needed a great deal of thought and an apt choice of words. In bitting sarcasm he retorted 'so far as thought is concerned, you do not need much to deal with a thoughtless speech; as for the choice of words you I.C.S. men should rise to the occasion.' I thought I would try to dissuade him from a militant outburst but failed. I particularly knew that V.P. Menon would not like it, realising his concern for Lord Mountbatten's relations with Churchill, but all my attempts to stave off a verbal duel came to nought.

I prepared the draft while he was having his nap. When he awoke he went through the draft twice, made a few verbal corrections and returned it to me beaming with satisfaction, saying 'See I told you that time did not matter.' He then told me to dictate the draft on the telephone to our Principal Information Officer. A.S. Ayyangar was then holding his office-and ask him to have it transcribed and repeated back so that there were no mistakes. Finding that any further attempt to delay matters

would be useless I did accordingly and asked Avyangar to issue the statement. He asked me if in view of Churchill being in the picture he should show it to the Prime Minister. I asked Sardar for his instructions. He told me curtly that it was not necessary and in any case,if he showed it to the Prime Minister it would never be issued at all.

The next day the rejoinder appeared in the newspapers and we received a number of calls from Delhi congratulating Sardar on the statement. But V.P. Menon spoke to me on the telephone in an angry tone and asked me why I had not consulted him before issuing it. I told him that it was Sardar who throughout took the initiative. I asked him if he would like me to convey his grievance to Sardar. That acted as a damper to Menon's spirit of annoyance. He then said that he was not sure how Lord Mountbatten would react to the statement. I told him that what mattered was how the Indian public would react and Sardar had received a number of congratulatory messages on the telephone. Menon then asked me if the Prime Minister had been consulted as it involved Commonwealth relations. I told him that that had not been done. Later Menon came back on the line and said that the Prime Minister had rung him up and seemed somewhat annoyed. Menon warned that he might ring up. But the call never came.

The following is an extract from that rejoinder:

> Mr. Butler's irrelevant reference to Hyderabad in the foreign affairs debate was the first indication of a section of the Tories still attempting to make capital out of India's troubles. Mr. Churchill's intervention in Parliament followed up by his speech at a Conservative rally seems to indicate that at least an attempt is being made to whip up enthusiasm in favour of Britain's one-time 'faithful ally against India. I should like to warn the British public against being taken in by these attempts. The question of Hyderabad can be solved peacefully if the Nizam would shed the utterly medieval conception of his rule though a ruling caste chosen almost entirely from a militant minority, and accept the democratic method of consulting and acting in conformity with the wishes of his people expressed through their elected representatives, and would recognise the inevitability of the consequences of action and interaction of geographical, economic and other compelling forces on the relationship between Hyderabad and India. But then in order to injure India's interests these distinguished products of a democratic age would forget the lessons of history and the teachings of democracy and stood to buttress a regime which still lives in the times that it was born. If therefore, disaster overtakes the fortunes of the Nizam, the responsibility will be elsewhere than on the Indian Dominion. I am glad to know that His Majesty's Government have not fallen a prey to these machinations of Mr. Churchill and his henchmen and have refused to treat the Hyderabad issue otherwise than as one of domestic concern of the Indian Dominion. I would therefore, appeal to the rank and file of the

Tory Party not to be misled by these old-world ideas of some of their leaders, but to extend to the Indian Dominion that goodwill and friendship which are as essential in British interest as in India's and to sustain and uphold the fine gesture they made in transferring power to Indian hands. It is only in this spirit and not on the malice and venom of Mr. Churchill's tongue, that an enduring relationship of friendship, co-opreation and collaboration can be built between India and Britain and other Members of the Commonwealth.

There is an interesting seguel to this incident. I think it was in 1949 that Anthony Eden, who was second to Churchill in the Conservative hierarchy, came to India and met Sardar. It was a long and purposeful interview at the end of which I felt that Eden was quite satisfied and happy that he had exchanged views with Sardar. They discussed many matters of common interest—Pakistan, India and the Commonwealth, transfer of power and subsequent developments, Burma, Indonesia and finally, as far as I recollect, he turned to Sardar and said 'I have a message to give you from Mr. Churchill.' Sardar was curious and had a twinkle in his eye. Eden said that Churchill had asked him to say that he thoroughly enjoyed the retort Sardar had made to him and that he had nothing but admiration for the way the new Dominion had settled down to its tasks and responsibilities, particularly those involving relations with the Indian States. Eden went on to say that Churchill had specially said that Sardar should not confine himself within the limits of India but that the world was entitled to see and hear more of him. Sardar was taken aback by both the forthrightness and warmth of the message. He asked Anthony Eden to thank Churchill warmly for the kind words and sentiments he had expressed and that he would bear his very generous and friendly advice in mind. I was so happy at this outcome that I conveyed it to V P. Menon almost in the next instant. Both of us sincerely felt what a great and chivalrous man Churchill was.

The tempo of activities in regard to Hyderabad was rising before Mountbatten left; it uncreased after his departure and was to assume a fierce aspect in another three months. In the meantime, however, in another State, so dear to Jinnah and spatially close to Pakistan the skies were overcast. Bloodly battles were raging between India and Pakistan on the sacred soil of the Happy Valley and the hills, plains and ravines of the Jammu Province of Jammu and Kashmir State. As I have said earliar that before Independence Mountbatten had tried hard to persuade the Ruler, Sir Hari Singh, to accede to Pakistan—a course from which he shrank. The Ruler was temperamentally indecisive; he knew that a division accoiding to what he believed to be Mountbatten's pointer would not be in the interests either of his dynasty or of India, neither of which he was prepared to abandon. He therefore, thought it best to confine himself, for the time being to a standstill agreement with both India and Pakistan. Pakistan accepted his offer, obviously with ulterior motives.

Since this meant control over its communications. supplies and trade for which the inlets and outlets were through Pakistan, it gave the latter an opportunity to paralyse its economic life. The pressure began to be felt ere long and the State began to reel under that pressure.

I have already indicated thar Sardar was content to leave the decision of accession to the Ruler and went so far as to say that if the Ruler felt that his and his State's interest lay in accession to Pakistan, he would not stand in his way. One might say 'Why this regard for the Ruler's interests'? One should remember that the burden of his appeal to Ruler in every case; accession, merger, integration or acceptance of India's Constitution, was that such a step was in the interests of both the Ruler and his people. There was, therefore, no different approach in the case of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, neither Junagadh nor Hyderabad, which had Muslim Rulers, was situated in a location which could be described as affording an alternative. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir however, an alternative did exist and had to be taken note of. The composition of Jammu and Kashmir State itself made this attitude necessary. The Valley was predominently Kashmiri Muslim, Laddakh was Buddhist, Jammu had a substantial population of Hindus and Sikhs, while the area to the north-west, west and south had a majority Muslim population closely allied to the Muslim of the Punjab and many of them had Afghan or tribal ancestry. In the absence of influences similar to these in British India and in view of the fact that the Rulers of Kashmir, who were Dogras, regarded the State as conquered or acquired territory, there had been no assimilation between these diverse elements. It could hardly be denied that it was the Ruler and his administration that kept these areas and these diverse peoples together. His hold began to weaken ever since the thirties when opposition to the dynasty took the form of an active popular movement headed by Sheikh Abdullah. Though served by able *Diwans* like Albion Bannerjee, Gopalaswami Ayyangar, B.N. Rau and Kailash Haksar, the gulf between his Muslim subjects and himself, particularly in the Valley was not adequately bridged. Occasional reforms kept the State quiescent but never reconciled for good. After a brief and erratic interlude, during which a representative of the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah was a member of Government, Ram Chandra Kak, a local Kashmiri Pandit, who was formerly the Ruler's Private Secretary, became the Prime Minister. Finding his sympathies not to his liking, the Ruler practically, on the eve of Independence, dismissed him and appointed General Janak Singh as his Prime Minister, to be followed a few months later by Shri Mehr Chand Mahajan, at that time a Judge of the Punjab High Court.

Both Jinnah and Pandit Nehru had earlier intervened in Jammu and Kashmir affairs but the Maharaja, erratically backed by the British, stood his ground and stuck to the pattern of constitutional reforms. Although a Dogra and biased in favour of that community, he enjoyed considerable popular affection, more in Jammu than in the Valley but quite consi-

derable even in this area. He had the welfare of the people at heart and was keen on the development of his State but he could not fix his mind on projects easily. Like Charles the First, his mind was as full of ideas as a warren is full of rabbits. In his ideas and intentions he was a benovolent ruler (for instance he believed in and maintained a high level of independence and quality of the High Court) and did believe in a responsive and partially responsible administration but he was shifty and indecisive. His ability was undoubted but he shunned meeting important persons lest he should be manoeuvred into committing himself irrevocably. He hated publicity and was most uncomfortable in public though in private discussions and arguments he could be very sensible and held his own. He was a slave of his fads, hobbies and habits—cooking, building and purchasing jewellry, to mention only a few. He was a man of taste and discrimination and a person of srong likes and dislikes. I happened to fall in his category of likes and what he could accept from me he would not from other's; this came in handy at times when the Government of India wanted him to take some unpleasant decisions. Both he the Maharani—a very intelligent, shrewd and popular person—were deeply religious and strong Hindus. This religious trait did not affect their benevolence which was of a secular character but did affect their attitude in political and adminisitrative matters. Neither of them was a real friend of the British power in India; so far as this aspect was concerned, like some other enlightened Rulers they made a virtue of necessity for their thoughts, convictions and feelings were definitely nationalistic. I can personally 'vouch for the patriotism and devotion to the interests of the country on the part of both of them. The royal family like that of other Rulers, had to contend with internal differences and intrigues; in the household itself certain influences were at work between the three of them—father, mother and son—which was not conducive to domestic harmony or peace.

The Maharaja, unlike some other Rulers, had no ambitions to be independent. He did want to move with the times and give responsible Government to his people. He chose as his Prime Ministers men eminent in public life and noted for their liberalism. He did not directly interfere with most of their decisions. He might procrastinate and postpone but seldom overruled them. He knew every inch of his State and met the important people. He knew the dangers that the Valley posed both to the integrity of the States and to his dynasty; this necessitated both caution and conservatism in dealing with its problems on the political plane but in other matters he was as keen on ensuring peace and progress as he was with the other parts of his State. He was an inveterate opponent of the League but less unkindly to the Congress. He had an allergy for Pandit Nehru who had tried to intervene in Kashmir affairs and who also had an affectionate regard for Sheikh Abdullah who had led the revolt in the state in the thirties. He had changed the name of his organisation from 'Muslim' to 'National' Conference. The Maharaja

regarded Sheikh Abdullah as basically an exponent of Muslim interests and with an ambition to dominate over Jammu and Ladakh and as such he had hardly any compunction in sending him to detention whenever an opportunity offered itself. He often criticised Pandit Nehru for making Sheikh *Saheb's* cause his own and thereby involving both himself and the Congress in his affairs. He had, however, a great regard for Sardar whose word alone among the Congress leaders he could trust. He was a man who could seldom repose confidence in anyone for long but his faith in Sardar proved to be strong and abiding.

This was the situation prevailing when suddenly the future of his State became a matter of acute controversy and conflict between the League and the Congress and between India and Pakistan. It was not easy to steer between the course of events. This fact has to be accepted in order to appreciate the currents and cross-currents that actively flowed from one direction to another. Sardar adopted the only policy that was practicable and that was to wait and see and, in the meantime, prepare for the contingency that the Ruler might wish to accede to India. The access to the State was through a comparatively small common frontier with Gurdaspur, the inclusion of which in India by the Radcliffe Award had angered and embitterred Jinnah. The Kathua Road, which was a mere glorified cart-track had to be widened. Till this was done, the only communication with the State was by air. The telergaphic and telephonic communications were uncertain and precarious and subject to being tapped by Pakistan. A courier system for private correspondence was thus the only means and on occasions this was what resorted to, for any personal discussion between the Maharaja and Sardar was likely to raise suspicion. Thus the State was isolated from India due to poor communications and at the same time accesss to and from Pakistan was barred bacause of a deliberate move to squeeze it economically and psychologically.

The Maharaja also played a waiting game. After his hide-and-seek encounter with Mountbatten he had no doubt where British sympathies lay. He realised the weakness of his position with Pakistan, the desire of which his State was only surpassed by its impatience to grab it. With this end in view preparations were already afoot, for with Jinnah, to get Kashmir had become an obsession. Pakistani agents were active and its sympathisers came into the open knowing full well that the Maharaja would not be able to take any action. From Gilgit to Domel, from Domel to Poonch and Jammu, from Jammu to Laddakh and from Laddakh to Gilgit the task of safeguarding the State from intrusion was a Herculean one. The forces at the Maharaja's disposal were inadequate in numbers and equipment. Though some of its officers were able leaders they were handicapped by having to spread out their forces thinly. There was no escape for the Maharaja but to seek India's help, if Pakistan cast discretion to the winds and attacked on some trumped-up charge. India's difficulty however, lay in that the only means of access available, was by

air. In such a predicament, therefore, it was inevitable for the Maharaja to leave it to events to shape themselves rather than take the initiative. Any false or premature step was bound to land him into a thicket of problems and he was not the type to burst through it 'like a bull'.

It is now a matter of history that Pakistan utilised this period of waiting to organise itself for a showdown. In true Machiavellian fashion it called the whole operation a tribal uprising or local unrest but the lid is off and the true facts are now too well-known to need repetition. The Maharaja's Intelligence Service warned him of the coming trouble to some extent. He made whatever feeble preparations he could but it was obvious that his forces would not be able to withstand the onslaught for long. India went ahead briskly with the road project and made precautionary arrangements but not on any large scale. In any case, no action could have been taken in advance in the prevailing circumstances and although Sardar was deeply concerned, often worried about the situation, he counselled patience and vigilance to the Maharaja who once or twice sought his advice.

The Maharaja's difficulties have to be realised. His State was a composite one; the unity in that diversity was provided only by himself; different elements were pulling in different directions. The Kashmiri Muslim felt greater kinship with the Kashmiri Pandit and vice versa than with the Punjabi Muslim of Mirpur, Poonch and other contiguous areas; the *Shia* and *Sunni* Muslims of Gilgit and the northern areas were more akin to tribes in Sinkiang; Laddakhis felt nearer the Tibetans than Indians; religious diversity was evident in the numerous sects.—Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists *Shias, Sunnis* and even followers of the Aga Khan. Administratively, there were developed areas and backward areas—some lived in prosperity and the majority in poverty. Several lakhs of the population subsisted for the year on six months' labour. The only intellectual elements were to be found among the Kashmiri Pandits who were generally distrusted by the others. If to this diversity is added discontent, intrigue, lack of a common bond among the influential sections of society one can get an idea of the resulting confusion. In fact, the whole situation afforded a very favourable opportunity for intrusion by alien powers and the new Pakistan was adept at this. The result was that when incidents began to be created on the borders by Pakistan, in the middle of October, the Maharaja, his administration and his Security forces were unable to cope with this situation or with the avalanche of tribal raiders which began to sweep over the borders in the third week of October. When the storm broke out, it did take us somewhat by surprise. We were still involved in dealing with the exacting and taxing post-Independence problems of partition of assets and liabilities, division of Services etc., resuming the various threads of administration, dealing with the exodus of Muslims on one side and of Sikhs and Hindus on the other, unravelling the tangled mass of property and rehabilitation questions of refugees, setting up new administrative structures, consolidating the position regarding the Indian States, mainta-

taining law and order attempting to curb the communal propensities of various organisations—Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and others—and ensuring that in the midst of all this turmoil the unity and integrity of the country and its secular character were kept intact. Amidst these preoccupations little attention could be paid to the faint indications of the trouble brewing in Kashmir. And even so the general conclusion was that we must watch and wait. The position between India and Pakistan on Kashmir was such that the initiative for any compelling action had to come from Pakistan. However, we were not altogether prepared for the form and manner in which it did come. It was clear that the whole episode had been systematically organised and it has been established beyond doubt that Pakistanis, high and low, were deeply involved and so also their military forces, though under a pseudonomy. Nor can important Pakistani personalities, Jinnah included, escape responsibility for letting loose on the Valley hordes of marauders whose dastardly acts of rape and pillage were reminiscent of some of the worst instances of this kind in history.

Both the intensity and surprise of the attack took their toll. The Maharaja's forces were inadequate to deal with the raiders and their advance was quick and well-organised. The whole operation was carried through according to a well-concerted plan and was in capable hands, namely members of the Pakistani armed forces and some ex- I.N.A. personnel. Faced by the approaching threat with which he could not deal, the Maharaja appealed to the Government of India for help—a natural and the only course open to him. His recently appointed Prime Minister, Mehr Chand Mahajan, who was a Judge of the Punjab High Court, had been deputed to the State in that capacity and was an intelligent and able person of forthright views and a staunch Hindu. He supplemented the Maharaja's appeal with his own. The appeal placed the Government of India in a quandary. These were not the days of chivalry when Rulers went to the rescue of other Rulers either in response to appeals for protection. These were the days of the United Nations, when for a State to take up arms even for a just cause against another, required circumspection and caution and had to acquire the sanction of jurisprudence.

The appeal had also to be considered in the light of its repercussions on Indo-Pak relations and on our external affairs. The situation contained the seeds of an open confrontation between India and Pakistan, particularly in view of the latter's determination to secure Kashmir at any cost. At that time, the British element existed in the Army at the top level ; the two Commander-in-Chief of the Dominions were British. The Supreme Commander, Sir Claude Auchinleck was still in office. Lord Mountbatten was the Governor-General of India and obviously could not contemplate with equanimity an open outbreak of hostilities between the Dominions. No one can blame him for trying to avoid a fight which would involve British elements on both sides. At the same time, India could not watch spectator-like an unchecked progress of tribal elements in the Valley gradually absorbing the whole of the area of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sardar was quite firm and was prepared to jump into the fray. Notions of chivalry, India- interests and his own conviction that Kashmir should be with India all prompted him to accept the Maharaja's appeal and rush to his aid promptly but the niceties of diplomatic deliberations between the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and himself had to be gone into. I would, however, like to maintain that it was Mountbatten's idea that India should first acquire the right to protect the State through accession though he hedged it with the condition of plebiscite under U.N. auspices. His advice was accepted and V.P. Menon was sent to negotiate with the Maharaja. The Maharaja was a bundle of nerves but knew what he was doing and while V.P. Menon was giving him the assurances he needed, Sardar was waiting impatiently at Delhi.

It was, however, easy enough to accept both the accession and the appeal. To translate the acceptance into concerte terms was a different proposition. While there was an excellent road between Pakistan and Srinagar, the only means of communication between India and Kashmir was by air and our forces at the time were fully committed. But we improvised military help hurriedly and sent a small contingent under Major Sharma to stop the raiders from coming to Srinagar from Baramula. An engagement took place some miles away from Srinagar. Our contingent was heavily outnumbered but put up a brave stand and halted them long enough, to enable us to organise further reinforcements, though at the cost of Major Sharma's life. The raiders' advance was delayed but not fully checked and they reached within a few miles of the city and the aerodrome—our only means of access to the Valley. It was virtually a touch-and-go situation. Hearing this and of Major Sharma's death, Sardar decided to visit Srinagar along with the Defence Minister, Sardar Baldev Singh. After a halt in Jammu, we reached Srinagar to find Brigadier Sen, who was in charge of the operation and had established his headquarters at the airport, in a somewhat desperate situation. The raiders were then at Badgaon and an ammunition jeep had been ambushed. Even the communications between the city and the aerodrome was not safe. Sen gave us an appreciation of the situation and pleaded that unless reinforcements were rushed he might not be able to hold the airport—which would have meant a most shameful retreat from the Valley and its abandonment to the raiders. That was also the first time when I met Sheikh Abdullah and Bakshi Ghulam Mohamed, who had come to the airport to meet Sardar. They apprised him of the situation in the city which was in a state of nervous apprehension and asked for urgent measures to deal with the raiders. There were some caustic comments on the Maharaja for having left Srinagar for Jammu taking with him his valuables. I must confess that although the advice given to the Maharaja to leave Srinagar was justified in the circumstances then prevailing, his action did lead to a great deal of misunderstanding among his people in the Valley and supplied very effective ammunition to his opponents and critics.

Sardar sized up the military situation quickly and decided to leave

post-haste for Jammu where he met the Maharaja. They discussed the military situation and I was agreeably surprised at the mine of information about the topography and physical features of his State which the Maharaja possessed. He had also a sound knowledge of military strategy and tactics. Obviously, he was not a mere figurehead. Thereafter Sardar left for Delhi where he arrived in a mood of serious reflection. He ordered the stoppage of all airline services and asked the Commander-in-Chief fly the required number of men and arms the next day to Srinagar in a continuous ferry flight operation after dawn. Both H.C. Sarin, who was Private Secretary to Sardar Baldev Singh, and I went round at night to get as many planes and their pilots ready for the flights the next day and they all responded cheerfully to a man. I think we were able to fly some six to eight hundred men the next day to Srinagar and with their help not only was Brigadier Sen able to hold on to his position but he was also able to counter-attack and break the back of the raiders, strength. They were turned away from a distance of six miles of the city and thereafter they were constantly on the run until they were back in their areas. They, however, left behind a trail of arson, rapine, pillage and other atrocities and I do not think that the contemporary generation has yet forgotten those days of ravages and misery.

This was on 4 November. However, in the meantime, an event had occurred which was to have a more profound effect on the fortunes of the State and the country than these military events or incidents. Ever since accession had been accepted, with a rider inserted at Lord Mountbatten's insistence to the effect that the accession would be tested by the wishes of the people of the State, Lord Mountbatten had been at pains to ensure that our action was not misunderstood by the U.N. and the constituent powers, big or small. Pandit Nehru, with his passion for understanding among foreign nations, was very sympathetic to the approach but Sardar had many mental reservations. He was for utilising the opportunity to finalise the accession without much ado or any further formalities. Lord Mountbatten persuaded Pandit Nehru to make a broadcast in which he was to announce that the accession would be subject to a plebiscite under the U.N. auspices. This was scheduled at 8.30 p.m. on 28 October. Sardar used to insist on seeing the text of important broadcasts including those of the Prime Minister. Pandit Nehru had a very busy day and could not send the text before 8.15 p.m. Sardar read it and noticed the embarrassing commitment. He tried to contact Pandit Nehru but the latter had left for the Broadcasting House. Sardar then commissioned me to go to the Broadcasting House and ask Pandit Nehru to delete the offending phrase 'under U.N. auspices' but to retain the commitment made at the time of accession, namely that the wishes of the people would be ascertained. I made haste to go to the Broadcasting House but by the time I reached there, Pandit Nehru had already begun his broadcast and in a few minutes the deed was done. That commitment has ever since been a millstone round our necks and has

been responsible for a great deal of embarrassment to us both in the U.N. and with the countries close to us.

However there was a ray of light in the surrounding gloom. By November 1947, C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, formerly Dewan of Travancore had recovered from his injuries sustained earlier because of a violent attack on his person. He had been out of commission all through the time that accession arrangements were finalised. By August 1947, the new relationship between the State and the Dominion Government had consolidated itself and the Junagadh problem had been solved. C P. Ramaswamy Iyer, formerly a staunch opponent of Sardar's policies, had now become a convert and wrote a very nice letter acknowledging his wrong assessment, proposing to fall in line with Sardar's policy and offering his services to Sardar in whatever capacity he thought fit. The letter touched Sardar's heart and he responded by inviting him to Delhi to stay with him. C.P Ramaswamy Iyer agreed and came to Delhi with his son. During his stay lasting two or three days he had very interesting talks with Sardar. He asked Ramaswamy Iyer to go to the U.S.A. on a lecture tour to create a proper understanding of the Jammu and Kashmir problem, to which he readily agreed.

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A Period of Tension

AFTER THE hostilities had subsided the Valley was practically clear of the raiders and the influx of Azad Kashmir forces had been effectively dealt with in the Jammu area including Rajouri and Poonch sectors, the Maharaja and Maharani began to move freely among the people, particularly among the refugees in the Jammu area. The people too seemed reconciled to their initial lapse in leaving Srinagar when the Valley was raided by the tribals. After reference of the dispute to the U.N. Security Council and commitment to plebiscite under U.N. auspices, the need for mobilising public opinion in favour of accession became a paramount consideration. Pandit Nehru regarded it as axiomatic that only Sheikh Abdullah could deliver the goods and was prepared to make any concessions to him to seek his support. The Sheikh's old animosity against the Maharaja asserted itself and he made it a point to reduce the Maharaja to a nonentity, although in a letter from jail before his release he had taken a submissive attitude and had maintained it in the interview following his release. Another bee in his bonnet was Mehr Chand Mahajan who was the Prime Minister and shared to the full the Maharaja's confidence.

Sardar did not trust the Sheikh nor did he share Pandit Nehru assessment of his influence in the State. He felt that our case in Jammu and Kashmir had to be met on the basis of the Maharaja's executing the Instrument of Accession, the thought of antagonising one on whose signature on that document alone we could justify our legal case in Jammu and Kashmir was distressing to him. He was cognizant of the Maharaja's weaknesses—his vacillation, his abhorrence of publicity, his retiring disposition, his hatred of Sheikh Abdullah, his constitutional apathy to handing over powers to the Sheikh, and his incapacity to take decisions. But he was prepared to tolerate these in the larger interests of the State and India. Sardar also felt that it would be in the long-term interests of India to utilise the Maharaja's undoubted influence among the various sections of the people to force a permanent bond between the State and India. He was also conscious of the tenuous link between the Valley, Ladakh and Jammu and felt that the Maharaja did provide, at least for the time being a nexus which it would be risky to weaken or abandon. He was also doubtful if the weakening of administrative authority by the Maharaja to the extent demanded by the Sheikh was in the interests of the State and India. He felt that the last thing that should occur at that

critical period was for the Maharaja and Sheikh to work at cross-purposes with each other or for the already disillusioned people of the State to harbour doubts about the future of the Government or the Maharaja.

But Sardar was not the only adviser to his Chief on Jammu and Kashmir matters. Pandit Nehru had developed an affection for Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, an ex-Dewan of the State, who combined with his undoubted talents of his constitutional acumen, his keen intellect and his grasp of the affairs of the State, his antipathy towords the Maharaja due, not so much to the slights he had received but to the baneful influence the letter had exercised over the course of politics, administration and history of the State. As was Pandit Nehru's wont then and later, he needed a supplementary counter to Sardar since he felt himself inadquate in comparison and he clung to Gopalaswamy to get support for his own policies in Jammu and Kashmir State. Gopalaswamy was on specially friendly terms with the Sheikh whom he had had to keep at day during his stewardship of the administration of the State. At that time he had the reputation of being a strong man and one who would not tolerate another centre of authority. The Maharaja who in many ways behaved as a constitutional ruler *vis-a-vis* his *Dewan* would not directly oppose or overrule him either. Gopalaswamy was made a Minister without Portfolio without, as I know, consulting Sardar. This was also in the train of serious differences that had arisen between Panditji and Sardar after Partition. In the highly surcharged communal atmosphere, it was inevitable for one to be considered a protector of Hindu interests and the other to be regarded as a Muslim sympathiser. There were people who actively sought to fan these differences and, what was worse, to poison the ears of Gandhiji and others. The activities of those who rallied under the Nationalist Muslim banner were particularly harmful in this surcharged atmosphere. The result was that the area of misunderstandings widened. It resulted in increasingly strained relations between the Prime Minister and his Deputy and since the latter was a leader in his own right Pandit Nehru had to look for outside support. That support was provided by two persons, Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and John Mathai, the Minister for Railways.

In such a situation of divided counsels and division in command one is reminded of Napoleon's remarks, 'one bad General is better than two good ones'. With Panditji, Sardar, and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar providing the top leadership, the External Affairs and States Ministries sharing the responsibility for Kashmir Affairs at the departmental level, and the Maharaja and his Government under Sheikh Abdullah pulling in different directions and at cross-purposes locally, it is a marvel that things did progress at all. The Gilbertian situation is best illustrated by the lament of Justice Dalip Singh who was for some time liaison officer of the Government of India in Jammu and Kashmir. In a state of bewilderment he suggested that when the Sheikh and the Maharaja were to be referred to in despatches etc. each should be mentioned separately but when the

concurrence of both was required, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir might be mentioned.

The problem of the rehabilitation of refugees both in the Punjab and Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir State had assumed importance of the first order after Independence. K.C. Neogy was appointed Minister for Rehabilitation. Both in general terms and in detail, relations with Pakistan also had priority. Pandit Nehru was, of course, his own draftsman in this matter but he relied on Lord Mountbatten and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar for advice on this delicate subject whenever he felt the need for such advice. Knowing Sardar's unshakeable views on these problems, any active daily consultation with him, which was a daily feature prior to Independence, was eschewed. Consequently differences, if any, were not resolved before action was taken but arose after the event with the result that tension accumulated instead of getting eased. There developed a certain aloofness between the two leaders and also a desire on the part of each to avoid the other in private. The result was that the 'aides' became more prominent and many talks were held indirectly or in absentia than face-to-face. The change of Pandit Nehru's residence from 17 York Road to what was the Commander-in-Chief's house, now called Teen Murti House, helped to widen the gulf. Gone were the days when the two leaders met each other more than once a day and talked out all the problems of the moment whether they involved any differences of opinion or not. Now the personal contact had been replaced by an impersonal correspondence which generally led to a crystallisation of their views. This was unfortunate in the present circumstances for both had their own egos, their own position in the country and in the case of Pandit Nehru a newly acquired status as Prime Minister—a fact to which he used to refer when cornered during the course of arguments or in correspondence.

Thus what were more minor misunderstandings during the period immediately following Partition developed into major differences that made them drift apart. The drift started with both following some rate lines during their tours of the affected areas. Pandit Nehru dealt with correspondence with Pakistan on his own lines though now and then he did consult Sardar over the drafts. Sardar dealt with the issues through public statements which, as that between him and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, became at one stage quite acrimonious. Differences of a more substantial and serious nature developed over the pronounced emphasis on the protection and problems of Muslims in India or those living India and playing down of the problems of Hindu and Sikh refugees returning to India or staying on in Pakistan. These were accentuated by cleavages of opinion over happenings nearer home in Delhi, in western U.P. and Ajmer, and over rehabilitation of refugees from Pakistan on lands and other property left by Muslims who had left for Pakistan. Sardar felt that if we did not follow an active and expeditious line on such settlement and concentrated on preventing Muslims who had decided to leave from going, the refugee problem would overwhelm us. Panditji had

different ideas on the subject and was keen, in the interests of secularism, to do his best to make them desist from going or keep the properties for them till their return. There were also differences over the action taken by officials and the police to suppress violence in Ajmer, Delhi and other areas. Pandit Nehru thought that action was heavily weighted against the Muslims while Sardar held the view that the authorities were as impartial as they could be in the circumstances, that the reports were highly coloured and that the primary concern on such occasions was to suppress the outbreak as swiftly as possible rather than to allow the forces of law and order to become demoralised and ineffective, by listening to interested parties. An additional cause of estrangement was Pandit Nehru's reliance on his own sources of information, which were not always reliable.

Two instances of differences in December 1947 led almost to a parting of the ways. One was a letter which Sardar wrote to Gopalaswamy Ayyangar pointing out that before he acted in regard to a particular request of the Jammu and Kashmir Government, he should have referred to the States Ministry. The other was the visit which the Prime Minister's Principle Private Secretary paid to Ajmer without reference to Sardar or the Chief Commissioner in order to make on-the-spot enquiries. Sardar regarded both these as an encroachment on his ministerial preserve and none can contest that both the proceedings which were without consultation with the Minister-in-charge were in breach of constitutional propriety. It is true that the overall responsiblity of the Prime Minister for the affairs of his Government cannot be challenged but the Prime Minister is no dictator and any action he takes or wishes to take in the departments in charge of his Ministerial colleagues must be in consultation with them except in an extreme case of the Minister's own misdemeanour. It is surprising that an able and experienced administrator like Gopalaswamy Ayyangar should not have realised this; his duties as Minister without Portfolio involved other Ministries and had not been precisely defined. It is equally suprising that a senior Civil Servant like H.V.R. Iengar should not have appreciated the niceties of the relationship between the Prime Minister and his Deputy or between the Government of India and the Chief Commissioner's Province. However that may be, the first incident subsided after a ripple between the two Ministers but Pandit Nehru jumped into the fray despite the matter having been settled between them. This was because of an incautious endorsement by Gopalaswamy Ayyganger of his correspondence with Sardar to the Prime Minister. Of course the Iengar episode became an issue between the Prime Minister and his Deputy Both incidents finally blew over though not without a threat of resignation on the part of Sardar. This was drawn up in the form of a draft but did not proceed beyond that stage due to personal discussions held between the Prime Minister and Sardar.

This was the state of relationship between the two when in response to Sardar's plea Gandhiji arrived in Delhi. He found Sardar very different from his former self. In his prayer meeting address the same evening, he referred

to this change in the following terms:

> When I came to Delhi yesterday, I found that the face and colour of the City had changed The people I met; I met Sardar; Rajkumari was there; none of them had any cheerfulness on their faces. There was no radiance. The Sardar used to walk with his head held high; I tell you the head is bowed low. Jawaharlal who walked in the air feels helpless. Why should they be helpless? I asked the Sardar, who is so brave. does he feel defeated? I am his friend, am I not. He was never like this.

Gandhiji's arrival, instead of being a cementing event between the two leaders, had quite the opposite effect. Gandhiji had not forgiven Sardar for having deserted him during the Cabinet Mission developments. His own absence in Calcutta and Noakhali, even though mitigated by occasional correspondence, had kept him out of touch with the vastly different situation that had developed in the country, the drastic change in the atmosphere after Partition and the communal virus that had affected all the three communities, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. In that emotionally charged atmosphere, heightened by the stark realities of the tremendous losses suffered by the Hindus and Sikhs emigrating from Pakistan, there was little scope for a response to appeals to reason, based either on secularism or on brotherliness between these communities. What was worse was that even Congress leaders of the three communities became the watchdogs of the interests of their respective communities rather than the crusaders of secularism. It was impossible in these circumstances for any leader to stretch a point in favour of the Muslims while it was possible to quietly afford them some protection. Sardar acted on this policy while standing up for the legitimate rights of the Hindus and the Sikhs returning from Pakistan. Unfortunately both Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji became the refuge of the disaffected Muslim population and, were charged not without basis by Hindus with doing this to the neglect of the interests of Hindus and Sikhs. Whether this was true or not was immaterial. Public impressions have the regrettable habit of assuming the character of incontrovertiable facts, particularly when they acquire support from outward behaviour. This was the tragedy of both the leaders during those fateful days between September 1947 and January 1948.

It was also very unfortunate for the country that during those days, Gandhiji's time was so fully occupied by events and discussions on so many matters of daily occurrence that he could not devote himself to the problems that were arising between Panditji and Sardar. He was the only one who could have brought the two closer. The only other person could have been Lord Mountbatten but he was as much suspect in Hindus and Sikh eyes of leanings towards Muslim interests as Pandit Nehru himself. The latter was being actively canvassed by a strong Muslim lobby headed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In the prevailing circumstances and public psychology it was as impossible for Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji to avoid

this impression of having Muslim interests foremost in their minds as it was for Sardar to avoid the impression of being a protector of Hindu and Sikh interests. Both forgot, however, that in that situation not only Hindu and Sikhs returning from Pakistan in such tragic circumstances but also those residing in the trouble-affected areas of India, were apt to harbour hostile feelings towards Muslims and brand them both as sympathisers and sponsors of Pakistan and as such more eligible for emigrating to Pakistan than remaining in India. The tribal raids on Kashmir valley and the Azad Kashmir onslaughts on Jammu had made matters worse and the normal Hindu and Sikh attitude towards Muslims, particularly in northern and north-west India, was one of unconcealed hostility.

If only Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji had taken note of this predominant public psychology and had struck a balance between Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs, it is not impossible that the Hindus and Sikhs would have been brought round to a reasonable attitude in course of time. It is significant that Sardar's speeches during these critical days were quite in keeping his approach. While on one side he sympathised with the plight of Hindus and Sikhs; gave active and practical proof of that sympathy and emphasised the need of Muslims for giving up their pre-Independence activities for the achievement of Pakistan he never failed to emphasise the necessity of extending full protection and security to loyal Muslims. Some extracts of his speeches during this period, including his brilliant performance at Amritsar to which reference has already been made, fully bring out this approach and are given below.

Speaking at Amritsar on 30 September 1947 on the Two-Nation Theory, he said:

> I am quite certain that India's interest lies in getting all her men and women across the border and sending out all Muslims from East Punjab. We can then settle down to the tremendous task of repairing the damage done and to make this land by our labours the same fruitful garden as our refugees have left behind.
>
> I have come to you with a specific appeal and that is to pledge the safety of Muslim refugees crossing the city. It is hardly creditable to us that we do not realize wherein our good lies. Muslim evacuees are going under agreed arrangements of exchange of population. They should really need no protection, but should be allowed to go in peace. Bitterness fed by years of propaganda of hate has gone too deep to allow any Muslim to remain in the East Punjab and any Hindu or Sikh to live in West Punjab. It is, therefore, in the interest of everyone that this exchange should be effected peacefully and smoothly. Any obstacles or hindrances will only worsen the plight of our refugees who are already performing prodigious feats of valour and endurance. It does not become a brave people to perpetrate deeds of brutality on defenceless men, women and children. This is not dictated by any code of chivalry or honour. If others cast chivalry and honour to the winds it does not

justify us in debasing ourselves. If we have to fight we must fight clean. Such a fight must await appropriate time and conditions and you must be wary in choosing your ground.

Speaking at Patiala on 22 October, 1947 while presiding over the Panthic Conference, the Sardar said:

But you are a brave people and you must face the situation like brave men. It does not behove the brave to besmirch the honour of their swords and the fair name of their community and country by spilling innocent blood. The time is for calm and dispassionate thinking over your future course of action and for wisely so shaping your conduct as to bring glory to that community and your country, and not for bemoaning your fate or counting your losses and vainly hoping to make up for them by retaliation. The Sikh community has been misrepresented and vilified abroad by certain interested propagandists. You have to rehabilitate your reputation which you built up during the two World Wars. For that, it is not enough to wield the sword, but to know how to use it. These propagandists are concentrating on maligning Sikhs.

There is another set of propagandists which is bent on isolating Sikhs and creating divisions between Hindus and Sikhs and propagating that it would now be a conflict between Sikhs and Hindus. This set is more hostile than the first. The latter is only creating a legend to serve to revive old imperialist justification for foreign rule in India. The former are, however, enemies both within our ranks and without. They must be guarded against and their propaganda given a lie to.

When we accepted division, it was like ourselves agreeing to have a diseased limb amputated so that the remaining may live in sound condition. But before we could start the process of healing, events have overtaken us. Evil cannot be met by evil, but by good. Although we cannot act in entire accord with the creed of non-violence in the imperfect state of mental and moral equipment which is necessary for that purpose, we cannot act in such manner as to degrade the sword which we wield. When the right time and the right cause come, you can use your sword to your heart's content. Now you have to sheathe your sword so that you can raise the moral tone of the people which is now at such a low ebb that lawlessness, contempt for law, attacks on innocent train passengers and brutalities on helpless persons are being perpetrated. It is up to all of us to check that tendency and you can give the right lead in the matter. We must create the right atmosphere in which we can achieve our cherished objectives of raising the status and the standard of living of the people. We must resusciate our moral sense which seems to have been dulled by the prejudices and anger which cloud our minds. Unless we rise above such prejudices and anger, we can never achieve all that we fought the struggle for freedom for.

Addressing a mass meeting convened by the *Praja Mandal* on the same day, he said:

I appeal to you to cultivate a proper sense of moral values. I ask you to do a little heart-searching. We can only advise you, but you can act on that advice only according to your capacity. If you are selfless workers, you will get your reward. But if you become involved in mutual jealousies and internecine quarrels, you can only do damage to the cause which you profess to uphold. When we achieved independence, it was with a view to carving out for India a place in the world polity, and to raising the stature and the standard of living of the people. Instead, we find ourselves fully preoccupied with the task of meeting the most gigantic problem of refugee relief that has ever faced man in human history.

This is not the time to involve ourselves in needless disputes, nor can we ever afford to follow the mirage of many 'stans' like Khalistans and Sikhistans or Jatistans. If we are not careful and become a prey to these inimical ideas, we can only succeed in turning India into a pagalistan (land of lunatics). It is, therefore, up to you to forget your mutual quarrels and behave with a sense of responsibility and in a spirit of co-operation and goodwill. We have formidable tasks before us. Attacks on railways, looting and the part which sometimes even the military and the police play in such incidents merely show that we are face to face with moral bankruptcy, which, if not checked, must mean downfall and ruin. Remember, if a hungry man dies of starvation, he dies without a stain on his honour. But one who steals to feed himself virtually suffers from living death. He has not followed the path of honour and glory, but that of shame and disgrace. If we want popular government, we must build uppopular support and strength. Princes want respect and reverence. They will gracefully yield to popular demands if they find that a sense of responsibility and popular support prompts the popular organizations. I, therefore, ask such organizations to work selflessly and in a spirit of public service and thereby earn not only the gratitude of the people but also the confidence of the Rulers and achieve the object which is neither inimical to the interests of the Princes, nor inconsistent with their responsibilities. For, after all, no Prince can afford to treat popular support with contumely, nor popular grievances with impunity.

What is significant is that these sentiments were expressed when our hands were full with post-partition problems of policies and administration and the aftermath of the blood-bath which was besmirching the population on both sides of the dividing line.

Addressing one of the biggest gatherings at Rajkot on 12 November 1947 on the Knotty Problems the Sardar said:

I have a special word of advice to say to Hindus and Muslims of Kathiawar. I recall how in the past Muslims of Kathiawar contributed to the League Propaganda of 'Two-Nation Theory' and now they took part in Lèague politics. But I have forgotten the part which is dead and gone if only they will treat it as such. But if they still feel an attachment to the 'Two-Nation Theory' and look to an outside power, they have no place in Kathiawar.

It was to put an end to this dual loyalty that we agreed to create Pakistan so that those who preferred to abide in that faith can find a place where they can pursue it. In India, there is no place for such persons If they stay in India, it can only be as loyal citizens; otherwise they have to be treated as foreigners with all the attendant disabilities. They should live in India like brothers and in harmony with non-Muslims.

I call upon Hindus to follow Mahatma Gandhi in his creed of non-violence. Recent disturbances have disgraced India in the eyes of the world and it is for us to win back our lost reputation by correct behaviour and noble conduct. At the same time I deplore the tendency to get panicky If we have to die we must die like brave men. As human beings with a sense of human dignity, we cannot die crying

I want Hindus and Mulims to forget the past and to live happily together To make it possible, let Muslims in India search their conscience and ascertain if they are really loyal to this country. If they are not, let them go to the country which claims their allegiance.

The wide compass of problems he covered in his speeches, those referred to above and those which follow is self-evident. There is not only clarity of thought but directive of and forthrightness of expression running through them.

Replying to an address presented by Mr. Samaldas Gandhi on behalf of the people at Junagadh on 13 November 1947, the Sardar spoke on the subject of 'No Outside Interference' as follows:

The problem of Hyderabad is the affair of India and India alone. India has no other wish except to remain at peace with Pakistan. After all, Pakistan is our neighbour and one does not pick quarrels with one's neighbour. We agreed to the creation of Pakistan in the spirit in which two brothers agreed to divide the joint property so that each would follow his independent existence in peace, security and prosperity. Pakistan felt that they would make of it a heaven on earth, but very soon hell was let loose. They perhaps realized that, faced with critical problems, India would not be able to deal with the inroads of her integrity and on her security.

The process of infiltration started with Rampur. There it was suppressed and eliminated. Junagadh was the next target. You have seen the result. In Kashmir they have followed even worse tactics. They have

raised communal passions amongst tribesmen equipped them and asked them to effect a coup d'etat. The result has been great sorrow, plunder, rape, loot, massacre, destruction of life and property and atrocities on women. The erstwhile Happy Valley has tasted the bitter experience of liberation by Pakistan. But our troops have cleared most of the Valley of the invaders and, God willing, they will completely eliminate them.

Meanwhile one hears rumblings in far-off Tripura. I should like to warn the authorities who are indulging in these manoeuvers that they should not be under any delusion that India's troubles have in any way undermined her strength. We have resources to meet a challenge from whatever quarter it might come.

At Jaipur in a public meeting held on 17 December 1947 the Sardar spoke on the subject titled 'Mantle Falls on Young Shoulders'.

We have to conduct Governmental affairs in a manner that each one feels it is his own government. Times are such that government is of those who exert and not of those who sit idle. You should be certain how and for what purpose you use power. We have to utilise power for the welfare of the downtrodden.

I find in the State there are the Parja Mandal and Congress, Hindu Sabha, R.S.S., Rajput Sabha, Jat Sabha and so on. This will not do. You have yet to get together and work together.

I have received complaints against the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. If so many complaints are received the Sangh should realize that there must be something wrong. I appreciate the enthusiasm of young men, but that should be diverted into constructive channels.

On the 29 December 1947, after opening a library at Mehrauli, New Dehli, the Sardar advised a big gathering of villagers as under:

A large number of Muslims had been living in Mehrauli but now they have left the place. The same kind of thing has happened in Delhi, the capital of India, and that is really deplorable. The communal rioting has given India a bad name abroad and provided the foreigners with a chance to say that the Indians are not capable of managing their own house.

If you are attacked, fight back by all means, but no one should commit such acts of barbarity as killing innocent women and children and patients in hospitals.

It is clear from these extracts that he tried his best to keep a balance between conflicting factors which governed the situation and called a spade a spade.

On his return journey from Shillong on 6 January 1948, the Sardar stopped for a day at Lucknow and addressed a vast gathering there on

the subject of 'You Cannot Ride Two Horses'.

I am a true friend of the Muslims although I have been described as their greatest enemy. I believe in plain speaking. I do not know how to mince matters. I want to tell them frankly that mere declarations of loyalty to the Indian Union will not help them at this critical juncture. They must give practical proof of their declarations. I ask them why they do not unequivocally denounce Pakistan for attacking Indian territory with the connivance of Frontier tribesmen. Is it not their duty to condemn all acts of aggression against India? I invite the R.S.S. to join the Congress and not to weaken the administration by creating unrest in the country. I realise that they are not actuated by selfish motives but the situation warrants that they should strengthen the hands of the Government and assist in maintaining peace. By using violence they cannot render true service to the country.

Today I think of those days when in this city of Lucknow the foundation of the two-nation theory was laid. It was said Muslim culture and tradition were not akin to those of the Hindus. Muslims were a separate nation. Muslims of this place played a very important role in advocating this theory. A few Nationalist Muslims protested against it. They combined with the Hindus because both were perturbed at the advocacy of such a theory and raised their voice. But my Muslim League brothers made a strong plea for separation. They said that they were not satisfied with sparate electorates and safeguard of minority rights. They wanted separation and the establishment of a separate State. Throughout the length and breadth of India the Muslim youth mostly came under their influence. They accepted it as the whole truth. Consequently, a wall was raised between them and those who were in the Congress.

In Calcutta on August 15, the Direct Action Movement was launched by them to give a direct blow to those who still did not believe in the two-nation theory. We then thought if there was to be a division of the country, let it be divided. Let them manage their own affairs and we will manage our own. After all, we had to drive out a foreign power. We were then facing the problem of getting rid of an alien rule. So we accepted the division of the country and thought we would see the partition question later.

The Muslim Leaguers call me their greatest enemy. Formerly they used to call Mahatma Gandhi as enemy number one. Now they think Gandhiji is their friend and have substituted me in his place, because I speak the truth. They believed if they got Pakistan, they would ensure full protection for the Muslims. But have they ever looked at the Muslims living in Hindustan? Have they ever sympathised with them? When freedom was won came the Punjab massacre which lowered our

prestige. Then came the Junagadh issue followed by the Kashmir problem. We raised the question with Pakistan. They replied: 'We are not concerned.' It was the Azad Government Dal in Kashmir and Kashmir Muslims who were responsible for aggression. But it is no secret that the Frontier tribesmen are receiving rations, war material, motor trucks and petrol.

I want to ask the Indian Muslims only one question. In the recent All India Muslim Conference why did you not open your mouth on the Kashmir issue? Why did you not condemn the action of Pakistan? These things create doubt in the minds of the people. So I want to say a word as a friend of Muslims and it is the duty of a good friend to speak frankly. It is your duty now to sail in the same boat and sink or swim together. I want to tell you very clearly that you cannot ride on two horses. You select one horse, whichever you like best.

If the relation between Pakistan and Hindustan continues as at present, the consequences cannot be foreseen. I am not hiding anything but I am telling bare facts. I would not like anybody to throw dust into our eyes. I appeal to the Hindu Mahasabhaites to join the Congress. No good will be served by remaining aloof. If you think that you are the only custodians of Hinduism, you are mistaken. Hinduism preaches a broader outlook on life. There is much more of tolerance in Hinduism than is interpreted. I appeal to the R.S S. to use their wisdom and work judiciously. I ask them not to be rash and tactless. Do not be aggressive. Those who are disloyal will have to go to Pakistan. Those who are still riding on two horses, will have to quit Hindustan.

Addressing a gathering at Rajkot on 15 Junuary 1948 on the subject of Status of India, he said:

My heart is full of agony because I have to leave Mahatma Gandhi while he was fasting. Nowadays some Hindus go out of their way in their speeches to speak ill of Gandhiji. I do not consider these people Hindus at all. If anybody has raised the status of India in the world, it is Gandhiji. The penance and purification of mind which he is able to undergo, we are unable to do. Yet they behave as if they have the monopoly of patriotism, reason and commonsense.

Replying to a civic address by the Bombay Municipal Corporation on the 16 January 1948 on the subject of Soldiers of Freedom's Army, the Sardar said:

We have just now heard people shouting that Muslims should be removed from India. Those who do so have gone mad with anger. A lunatic is something better than a person who is mad with rage. One

can be treated, and perhaps cured, but the other loses complete control of himself. They do not realise that they stand to gain nothing by driving out a handful of Muslims. At the same time, we have to sympathise with these people who have lost their dear ones and their valuables. I have just now come from Rajkot. Thousands are coming to Kathiawar deprived of everything that they possessed. Anger rules their heart and turns their minds completely. But we have to tolerate all this. At the same time so long as we are in Government, we have to govern. If we cannot act as trustees for the entire population, irrespective of religion, caste or creed, we do not deserve to be where we are. Shouts like these cause me worry and agony. I frankly ask myself, 'are we to admit before the world that we are not fit to rule?'

We long to reach there, but we simply do not have the capacity to do so. He has reached a height where he is not swayed by anger or malice. He is full of love and affection. If we had such a pure heart as he has, we would have realised the difference. We cannot, therefore govern as he would like us to do. Instead, we have to maintain the police and a strong army. The guilty have to be punished and wrong-doers have to be censured. Those who indulge in such shoutings must, therefore, realise what the consequences of breaking the law would be.

But, for their attitude, I cannot forsake truth. I cannot descend from the pedestal of duty. Some of them went to Gandhiji and complained about my Luchnow speech in which I had criticised them for not condemning Pakistan's attitude to Kashmir. They went and told Gandhiji many things and Gandhiji felt compelled to defend me. That also pained me, for after all, I am not a weak person who should be defended by others.

I made it clear then that not on any single item would I go before the Tribunal, but at the same time I emphasised that the whole agreement would be implemented on other issues. I could never have agreed to the proposition that all gains were theirs and losses ours. They, however, claimed it in isolation. We all decided that this was entirely wrong, and it should be resisted. Pakistan papers and spokesmen, when they heard of it, emitted poison. When Gandhiji undertook the fact, we thought we could clear the atmosphere. For, after all, when we are throwing money like water, why should we cavil at the payment of Rs 55 crores if it meant some relief to Gandhiji's mental agony? We hope it will evoke some response from Pakistan. But if it does not, the fault is of our fate. It is true we have to take the people with us. But we have also to think of Gandhiji. We take a short range view, while he takes a long-range one.

To all outward appearance, there is peace in Bombay City, but it is notthe peace which existed here ten years ago, when the poison that

has spread during the last seven years had not spoiled the atmosphere. When that peace will return, we do not know. We should, however, make efforts to that end. If we fail, we can only curse our stars. For it would be a misfortune of India.

Nevertheless, we cannot blind ourselves to the fact that we have achieved something by making India more united today than it was at any time during the past several centuries. We should unite more, but that requires a determined effort. In such united India, Muslims should feel as secure as the rest of the population. For this, however Muslims will have also to change their outlook. They must forget the lesson which has been taught to them of the two-nation theory. We have to create an atmosphere in which Pakistan can go to way it likes, and India can follow its own course. In creating this atmosphere, Bombay must play a leading part. You are distant from the scene of misery, privation and devastation. The bloodshed in Pakistan flows down to Delhi, and turns people's mind. Here you can take a detached view. The nation's leader, Jawaharlal, has during the last few months, aged by ten years.

Inaugurating the new Saurashtra State at Jamnagar on 15 February 1948, the Sardar said:

Despite gloomy prognostications of what would happen after August 15 in so far as the States are concerned, it is a matter for gratification that matters have shaped so well. With the lapse of Paramountcy, some sort of a vacuum has been created and the people have been greatly concerned about their future. The amputation of a limb is a painful process but it is dreadful to imagine as to what would happen if the living organism itself was hacked to bits. Thanks to Providence India today is alive and alert and has survived partition...

These speeches were made in the context of Muslim support for the League before Independence, the fact that Chaudhury Khaliquzzaman and some other leaders migrated to Pakistan despite having sworn loyalty to India, the strained relations with Pakistan, the activities of Nationalist and *Jamiate* Muslim leaders to which a reference has been made, the activities of Pakistan in Junagadh and Jammu and Kashmir, the hostile feelings these activities had roused among Indians in the areas involved and the neighbourhood, the tension among refugees and the personal vendetta being carried on against Sardar at the time. There is no doubt, however, that his speeches at Amritsar and Patiala received warm appreciation from all quarters including Lord Mountbatten and John Mathai and completely changed the situation to the benefit of both India and Pakistan. His speeches in Bombay and Rajkot not only give expression to his mental anguish at the recent events, including his reactions to Gandhiji's fast but also show that notwithstanding his differences with Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru his deep regard and anxiety for them was not mininized. His spee-

ches at Mehrauli and elsewhere express his true feelings about the tragic events that engulfed these areas during the disturbances. These being contemporaneous with the situation prior the dastardly assassination of the Father of the Nation, they bear eloquent testimony to his innermost thoughts. His speeches at Jaipur and Lucknow give a glimpse of his straight-forward approach to the Hindu-Muslim relationship in the context of developments before and after Independence.

Of all these, his Lucknow speech was the main target of attack and a powerful campaign was built up against him. Gandhiji unfortunatly fell a victim to this propaganda. Coming almost simultaneously with the decision to withhold payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, Gandhiji was provoked to make some critical references to Sardar in his post-Prayer speeches. Even I, his Private Secretary, came in for criticism. Referring to that period Acharya Kirpalani, made some adverse comments on Sardar's relations with Gandhiji. In his book, Gandhi, his life and thoughts he notes:

> It pains me to recall that on one occasion when some Bahawalpur refugees wanted accommodation arrangements to be made for them, Gandhiji wished to discuss the matter with the authorities. He, therefore, asked Pyarelal to phone the Sardar's Secretary to meet him. His reply was that he was too busy to see Gandhiji. Gandhiji's relations with the Government had become so strained that a Secretary could tell him that he had no time to meet him. The Secretaries take their cue from their superiors.

What really took place was something like this. Among the refugees from Pakistan were some State employees of Bahawalpur who pressed for the same priority in absorption in the Central Services as the displaced Central Government employees. On the advice of the Home Ministry, Sardar decided that this claim was untenable and that they would be entitled for consideration only after the absorption of the Central Government employees. It was not unusual for people those days to think that I was the villain of the piece in all unwelcome decisions that Sardar took. That such a view was most uncharitable to Sardar should have been obvious to those like Gandhiji, Pandit Nehru and Acharya Kirpalani who had known Sardar for more than two decades and knew that he was master of his own mind. But at the time any stick was good enough to beat Sardar with and it was assumed in Gandhiji's camp that I exercised uncanny powers over that masterful personality. When the Bahawalpur contingent complained to Gandhiji about Sardar's orders, they appear to have added that I was against them, and hence the order. Partly for this reason and partly perhaps out of curiosity to see at close quarters the civil servant who had reputedly acquired such a hold over his erstwhile yes-man, Gandhiji told Sushila Nayyar to inform me that I should see him.

She accordingly rang me up to see Gandhiji about the matter. I quietly explained that the order was that of the Sardar. When he came to the

house, I would ask him and if he thought that I should see Gandhiji and explain the position I would do so. She somewhat angrily told me off for not paying any heed to Gandhiji's words. I replied that as Sardar's Private Secretary, I must take his instructions first before doing anything else. Sushila terminated the telephonic conversation by saying that she had conveyed Gandhiji's message and it was up to me to pay heed to it or not. When Sardar came to the house, I mentioned the matter to him. Sardar said he would explain the position to Gandhiji himself and it was not necessary for me to go. He asked Maniben to convey this to Gandhiji. I was thus completely out of this matter. Much to my surprise however, I read, in the papers next morning that Gandhiji had mentioned me in his post-Prayer meeting. But the honour was short-lived when I learnt that he had found fault with me for not being able to find time to see him. I was unhappy and went straight to Sardar who angrily enquired of Maniben if she had explained the real position to Gandhiji. Maniben pleaded that she had done so. Sardar told her to go and remind Gandhiji of her having done so and say that he himself would come and explain the issues involved and the soundness of the decision. Maniben accordingly went to Birla House and remined Gandhiji of her conversation with him. Gandhiji conceded that she had done so. However his post-Prayer reference to the matter was a qualified one. When I read it the next morning I implored Sardar to put an end to this embarrassing situation so far as I was concerned. He accordingly went to Birla House and explained the position. Notwithstanding that, Gandhiji expressed his desire to Sardar to see me and accordingly when he went to Birla House the next morning to see him, he took me with him. I had the honour of paying my respects to that august and revered personality for the first and last time. I was the recipient of a most disarming and benevolent smile from the Saint of Sabarmati and Sevagram. The incident shows to what extent even trifling events were transformed into a *cause celebra* in that atmosphere of strain and tension.

Sardar had been very busy touring and dealing with the problems of the integration of States and Kashmir ever since the surrender of Junagadh by the Pakistan Dewan Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto. He had also to tour extensively the areas of Rajasthan, Bengal, Assam and the United Provinces. He returned from his successful tour at the end of the first week of January. At Calcutta he had very fruitful talks with Rajagopalachari who was then Governor and whose guests we all were at the palatial Government House. Prafulla Ghosh was then the Chief Minister. Sardar addressed a mammoth meeting at Calcutta in which he surveyed the problems India faced *vis-a-vis* Pakistan and the far-reaching consequences of Partition on West Bengal. The peace of Calcutta was in those days threatened by a call for strike given by the Labour leaders of a particular persuasion. The speech of Sardar was so forthright and effective that the strike flopped completely and life in the city was quite normal.

In Assam Sardar and his party were the guests of Akber Hydari, the

Governor, with whom Sardar had a very constructive discussion on tribal affairs. He also had meetings with the Naga leaders and the leaders of the Khasi Hills States. It was interesting to see how even in these distant regions his impressive personality and breadth of vision commanded respect and admiration and his words, found its way to the heart of his listeners.

During his discussions with Akbar Hydari, tribal affairs came up for special consideration and I recall vividly Sardar telling the Governor to adopt a policy which would wean the tribes away from the British and the missionaries, not by any 'forward' policy but by welfare activities, which would respect their traditions, customs and tribal systems and at the same time would make them amenable to intermingling with Indians, giving them a sense of pride of being a part of this great country. In short they should not feel the loss of the British and missionary presence in the region. He translated this approach into meaningful words in all his discussions with the tribal people and leaders of the Khasi Hill States. I was agreeably surprised to find Sardar so full of the milk of human kindness with regard to these people and so dedicated to the task of uplifting these backward regions in the interests of India's unity and integration. Akbar Hydari, who was already his admirer appeared almost a devotee after all these discussions and both he and Lady Hydari bade Sardar a warm and affectionate goodbye. Needless to say as long as he lived, Akbar Hydari followed the lines suggested by Sardar and Sardar felt a personal bereavement when he suddenly passed away while still in office. When he was succeeded by Shri Prakasa as Governor, Sardar wrote him a letter which explained the problems of Assam and the approach to be made towards their solution, with such insight and in such a statesmanlike and competent manner that it drew from the latter a remark which he made to me to the effect that he was amazed that from his distant Delhi, Sardar had such a deep realistic and close familiarity and understanding of the problems of that Province and had worked out such an enlightened and constructive solution of those problems. In fact, this letter ranks with his subsequent letter of 7 November 1950 on Tibet, as outstanding evidence of the grasp and mastery Sardar had gained over a forbidding intricate situation.

He devoted these visits to Calcutta and Shillong to steady public opinion on the post-Partition problems which affected these Provinces intimately. Under the Cabinet Mission Plant of 16 May 1946, Assam was likely to join Bengal in a group which, it was obvious would opt for Pakistan without any regard for Assamese sentiment. Under the 3 June Plan, Assam succeeded in extricating itself from that fate but it had to pay the penalty with partition of Sylhet. We found that there was little regret for the price paid since most of the population was Bengali between whom and the Assemese there was no love lost, as events latter, proved. In fact, Sardar after discussion with the local leaders including Gopinath Bardoloi and Bhanju Ram Medhi came to the conclusion that to the Assamese, a Muslim from across Pakistan was less unwelcome than a

Bengali from West Bengal. It was a sad and tragic state of affairs but it underlined even more vividly the need for integration and unity on which Sardar had set his heart. The position of emigrants from Pakistan was both a fresh and live issue. It emphasised the artificial nature of separation which went against the dictates of economics and geography and demonstrated clearly the utter folly of Partition. But then the die had already been cast under compulsions detailed earlier and there was no going back.

West Bengal had also to pay the penalty for Partition. Khulna and Murshidabad had to be partitioned and the integrated life of the two districts had been torn asunder. The political boundary did not constitute the rigid partition wall of East and West Berlin or the epic line that Lakshman drew to define the limits within which Sita could move with complete security. For West Bengal, partition did not only involve geographical division but also division of population and economy, the life line of communications, and of people zealously attached to the same culture and language. Although the leaders of West Bengal had accepted Partition under the stress of tragedies that had stalked the province since late 1946 and threatened to engulf it both regret and remorse were clearly visible to the discerning eye.

Sardar sensed the situation and had therefore decided to embark on this tour. He made it his rule to explain the decision of Partition, to plead for unity in order to meet the crises that had developed and to breathe the fresh air of realism into the emotional conflict and confusion which prevailed.

For this purpose he visited Shillong and Calcutta in January 1948 and addressed large gatherings of people—one Calcutta meeting had an audience of half a million. In his Shillong speech on 2 January he referred with gratification to the achievement of organic unity by the integration of Indian States; separate 'Rajasthans' would have covered the whole body politic of India with ulcers. Giving the lie to Pakistan's propaganda that Indian leaders were not reconciled to Partition and emphasising the role of Muslims as citizens of India, he said that Muslims in India must stand by their country and tell Pakistan : 'You have got what you wanted. For heaven's sake let us now live in peace.'

He dealt with this theme even more directly in his Calcutta speeches. Emphasising that there could no serious talk of a Hindu State in India, he pointed out that we had 45 million Muslims in the country, a fact which in itself pointed to the secular character of the State. So far as Pakistan was concerned, he only wanted it to flourish and prosper, and that was why he personally had seen to it that Pakistan had been treated generously in the matter of division of assets. He, however, emphasised two major points. First, Pakistan should instead of snipping at India and behaving like a thorn in India's side, settle down to its own problems. Second it was a fact that many of the Muslims of India had helped in the propagation of the Two Nation Theory which had resulted in Partition; and they owed it as a duty to India to settle down as its loyal

citizens and establish their loyalty in action.

The urgent need to strengthen industry formed a major topic in these speeches. Sardar was never tired of telling management and labour of the need of increasing out put and establishing better labour relations.

These also formed the content of his speechs in Bombay, Bhavnagar and Ahmedabad, latter in the same month. By this time, Sardar had succeeded in bringing about the integration of the States in Orissa and the Central Provinces; and the negotiations for the unification of the States in Kathiawar had been successfully concluded. Sardar was therefore able to breathe a note of gratification in his speeches to compliment the Rulers on their patriotism and democratic spirit, and express his satisfaction that his dream of a greater Gujarat was taking concrete shape. He continued to advocate greater production and industrial peace.

> I appeal to labour and capital to honour the industrial truce recently reached at the Delhi Conference. The truce does not mean there would be no justice done to labour, if it has a legitimate grievance. They seek arbitration without resort to strikes. If they failed to produce enough to meet the needs of the country, they would not be able to keep pace with the progressive nations of the world.

These speeches, which cover the period of more than a month of touring all over the country show how keen Sardar was to explain the reasons which led to Partition and consequent developments, to justify the policies of the Government in the light of the criticism to which they were subjected and to bring the country to a realisation of the new duties and responsibilities that developed on it. Sardar did not believe in speaking for the sake of speaking; he spoke for an occasion and with a purpose and his normal practice was to share with me a few of the thoughts that were uppermost in his mind, an hour or two before his speech. On such occasions, I could sense the anguish in his mind over his differences with Pandit Nehru, the manner in which a gulf was separating the two, the way in which he was being misrepresented by Muslim communalists and their Hindu protagonists before Gandhiji, the bitterness he felt over having been let down by Panditji on the question of payment of Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan, the wrong decision taken to refer the Kashmir case to the U.N. and the most unfortunate decision of Gandhiji to undertake the fast. He felt particularly keenly, the attempt to create a wall between himself and Gandhiji and the manner in which the latter voiced his feelings regarding Sardar's attitude, generally in private but sometimes even in public. It is to all these and the events preceding his final reconciliation with Gandhiji within a few minutes of his assassination, to which I will turn in the next chapter.

Eleven

The Tragic Climax

THE HISTORY of the Congress is full of instances where divisions and conflicts of opinion, even though deep, were somehow smoothed over and a picture of unity presented to the public. However, these conflicts sometime erupted like a tidal wave and disturbed the equanimity of the proceeding. The truth of this outstanding feature is evident if one goes back to pre-Independence times and studies the events culminating in the Surat Congress or scans the events immediately preceding the Amritsar Congress whereafter a parting of ways occurred between the Congressmen, who fell under the spell of Gandhiji's philosophy and the liberals who decided to carry out the reforme for what they were worth or whether he surveys the birth and growth of the Swaraj Party and Gandhiji's clear submission to the decisive stand taken by Deshbandhu Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru.

Pandit Nehru, Sardar, and Gandhiji had figured in this aspect of Congress history for more than two decades. On several occasions Sardar and Gandhiji had stood together in opposition to Pandit Nehru's views and, whenever this happened, there was the familiar line-up of supporters on each side. Thus, when in opposition to the then operative Congress creed, Independence became Panditji's battle cry, he leaned on the support of Subhas Chandra Bose and Srinivas Iyengar, only to give them up when he subscribed to the Nehru Report which accepted Dominion Status with a time limit. When Pandit Nehru raised the banner of socialism at Lucknow in alliance with the Young Turks of the Congress, differences again erupted in public; it was clear which way the views of Sardar and Gandhiji lay. The storm, however, passed over. The controversy between Gandhiji and Subhas Chandra Bose at the time of the Tripuri Congress again divided the Congress into tho camps. For a time, the old guard under Gandhiji's leadership was without Pandit Nehru but towards the end, Pandit Nehru also cast his lot with the old guard much to the lasting bitterness of Subhas Bose. During the war, differences developed between Gandhiji and others of the Congress Working Committee but Gandhiji adapted himself to the others. There was a conflict over the policy of non-violence when Sardar and Pandit Nehru stood together against Gandhiji's views; the combination was, however, short-lived; Sardar tried to stage at Ahmedabad a repetition of the Imperial repentence at Canossa but met with stiff resistance from his own supporters in the Gujarat Congress. The Cripps Mission found Sardar and Gandhiji ranged against Pandit Nehru and Maulana

Azad; the new alignment lasted virtually till nearly the end of the Cabinet Mission discussions. But after Maulana Azad lost favour with his colleagues over his separate discussions with the Cabinet Mission behind their backs and Sardar developed courage to differ from Gandhiji,, Panditji found a strong support, in Sardar against Gandhiji's line.

There is no doubt that Gandhiji was touched to the quick at this desertion by his confirmed yesman and I doubt if he ever forgave him. What is more, thereafter Gandhiji kept aloof from Congress politics in the same manner as he did when he conceded the Congress platform to Swarajists twenty-three years earlier. Although Pandit Nehru still entertained the same personal feelings of veneration and admiration towards Maulana Azad, he realised that his support could not be as useful as before. On the other hand, Sardar's support was active, helpful, strong and decisive. The result was that from mid-1946 onwards upto Independence, Pandit Nehru not only leant on Sardar for support but there was almost complete identity of views between the two. In fact, there were important occasions when Pandit Nehru surrendered his judgement almost completely to Sardar. The outstanding instances of these were the decision to accept Dominion Status as an interim measure in March 1947, to accept Partition in May 1947, and the manner in which he left the details of Partition and leadership of the Indian Wing of the Partition Council as well as the problem of the States minus Kashmir entirely to Sardar. Finally, the composition of the first Cabinet after Independence was predominantly influenced by Sardar and its national character was entirely the idea of Sardar. I am sure that in later years Pandit Nehru must have regretted the inclusion of men like S.P. Mookerji, Sardar Baldev Singh, C. H. Bhabha N. V. Gadgil, K. C. Neogi and B. R. Ambedkar in it. A time came when there was no love lost between Nehru and John Mathai although in 1947-48, both of them seemed to form a sort of mutual admiration society. As regards the others one by one, they were dropped or left of their own accord, the last to go being Sardar Baldev Singh. Some of these partings I shall have to refer to later ; for the time being the point to bear in mind is that upto August-September 1947, there was hardly ever a ripple on the calm surface of the relationship between Pandit Nehru and Sardar.

However, not long after, the two began to drift apart. Some of the matters involved in the differences between them, have already been covered. From November 1947, the differences seemed to be moving towards a climax. Two of Sardar's colleagues, John Mathai and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar could even be unpleasant in their correspondence with Sardar. The latter, when out of office, was good enough to express his unstinted admiration for Sardar's way of bringing about the accession of the Indian States. But after his inclusion in the Cabinet he definitely aligned himself against Sardar, became virtually the Minister for Kashmir and Pakistan affairs, thus in derogation of Sardar's portfolio and in conformity with Panditji's stand. John Mathai also had occasion to

comment appreciatively on Sardar's handling of the States and particularly admired Sardar's speeches at Amritsar and Patiala. Regarding, the latter he wrote a commendatory note in his own hand. Otherwise, however, he felt that Sardar's approach to the communal problem in the country was not in keeping with the secular policy of India. Issues coming up before the Cabinet were so predominantly those concerned with the communal problem or relations with Pakistan that sharp divisions of opinion on these matters obliterated any favourable impressions left by an identity of views on other matters.

Sardar was a hard-liner on both these dominant problems and as such he not only differed strongly from Pandit Nehru but also found Lord Mountbatten out of sympathy with him. Sardar did not hesitate to call a spade a spade and, since both the Governor-General and Pandit Nehru hardly left anything for him to say by way of condemnation when the Hindus were at fault, it fell to Sardar to restore the balance either by exposing the other side by bringing out facts which were either not available to the others or to which importance had not been attached. Whether the matters referred to happenings on this side of the frontier or to what taking place on the other side, this was broadly the genesis of whatever conflicts of opinion manifested themselves. Due to lack of contact between Pandit Nehru and Sardar, owing either to the separate tours undertaken by them or to their respective preoccupations or due to their differing conceptions of priorities conflicts arose whenever they met rather than the many matters on which there were no differences of opinion. Between the two, I have the impression, shared by many who knew them both without necessarily being aligned, that personal reactions were more influential and decisive with Pandit Nehru than with Sardar. On a dispassionate assessment of both the personalities at close quarters, I make bold to say that personal likes and dislikes governed Panditji much more than they did Sardar and were more deep-seated with the former than with the latter. This difference between the two had to be borne in mind in assessing the impact of the developing conflict on contemporary events and on Gandhiji who undoubtedly at the time felt closer to Panditji than Sardar, mostly in view of their common approach to the dominant problems.

As regards Lord Mountbatten, the partiality of the British regime to the Muslims and their position in the Indian polity is a historical fact and with all his desire to hold the scales even, Mountbatten could not be completely free of this partiality. There is no doubt that since he became Governor-General of India, he tried his best to safeguard the interests of the country of 'adoption'. But he would not have been human if he had remained entirely uninfluenced by the historical fact of the instinctive and interested sympathy of the British for the Muslim position or by the theoretical concept of the obligation of the majority to protect or even concede to the minority. In my opinion, both he and Pandit Nehru ignored the fact that it was inevitable, in view of the recent past, that the

Hindu should, during those critical days, suspect the *bona fides* of the Muslims and that the latter should inwardly revolt at the loss of the favoured position they enjoyed before Independence. If there was a realistic recognition of this intensely human factor and if policies and measures even somewhat demonstrably allowed for this undoubted and inescapable fact, it is likely that the course of history of those fateful months would have been a less tumultous one. What is more, the impression of the over-zealous regard for Muslims and Muslim interests would not have gained the currency it did. The same could, in fairness, be said of Sardar so far as the position and feelings of Muslims were concerned but the differece lay in the fact that for the most part Sardar had to take up a defensive position.

As regards relations with Pakistan, Mountbatten's efforts were always in favour of moderation and it was an article of faith with him to avoid a conflict between the two Dominions as long as he was the Governor-General of one of them. As would be clear from Sardar's speeches during this period, he believed in taking a positive line in dealing with Pakistan rather than indulge in refinements or diplomatic niceties with a country which was blatantly hostile and virtually at war and which had, according to him, in its behaviour and propaganda shown duplicity, falsehood, deceit and sometimes even malignity. It was inevitable, therefore, that he and the Governor-General should see things differently and the latter felt more at home in these matters with Pandit Nehru. Pandit Nehru on his part leant on the Governor-General when he was challenged by his colleague—a strategy which he followed with Lord Mountbatten's successor also. When he found himself in difficulties with Sardar, he turned for support to Rajagopalachari in the certainty that he would get it.

The configuration was not, however, triangular and Gandhiji very much counted in the personal equations that ruled the policies and events at the time. Whether he was at the Bhangi Colony or at Birla House, his doors were open to all and sundry. For lesser men access to him was a high-road to public prominence. For the Muslim leadership he was undoubtedly a hospitable shelter and a safe refuge. His outlook was secular to the core and he passionately believed in the high moral responsibility of the majority community towards the minority. He was also passionately attached to the idea of vindication of the country's secular policy to the world at large. For him, communalism was not only anatheme but a forbidden creed altogether. At the same time he was more than an idealist, namely a visionary. This was a major difference between him and Pandit Nehru. More often that not, he was an enigma and rarely could he see matters from the point of view of the average citizen. The consequence was that he completely ignored the fact that when emotions were roused, outlook was coloured, passions prevailed and the feelings of the average individual became more prominent than that of the intellectual elite or the moralising philosopher or the sermonising saint. In the process, he lost sight of the fact that Sardar as the realist

in such circumstances was more likely to stand for the average individual than the exceptional intellectual, philosopher or saint. It was unfortunate that when he had to assess events or Sardar or when he had to weigh the current situation he overlooked this dominant feature and persisted in a course of action which alienated the average individual. I think it was the greatest tragedy of India that the saintly figure who counted so much was so isolated in his assessment of the situation and the psychology of the country.

It was in this atmosphere of conflict and isolation, from each other and from the environment that events were again getting the better of men, who could have given a different turn to them. The refugee problem caused a sharp cleavage on the question of preventing Muslims from going to Pakistan or facilitating the return of those who had gone. In conformity with the views he publicly expressed, Sardar felt that there was no need to take action on these lines. His view was strengthened by a careful assessment of the position. He realised that at that stage Pakistan, holding out the promise of a new heaven, was the star attraction for Muslims who had stoutly held to the Two Nation Theory. He was convinced that it was in the interests of the integration and unity of the country that those who had external loyalties, demonstrated in such an unmistakable manner should not be prevented from going or given facilities to return. He also felt that if any such move was successfully made, the problem of rehabilitation of millions of displaced refugees would become impossible of solution and they would be consigned to a long period of homelessness, penury and hardship. He also thought that such a policy would doubly benefit Pakistan in that it would secure all the wealth of the richer section of its population and at the same time solve the problem of minorities at one stroke of expulsion. In expressing these views he got strong support from some of his colleagues like Shyama Prasad Mookerji, N. V. Gadgil and Sardar Baldev Singh but found himself ranged against the Governor-General, Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru. There is no doubt that in the atmosphere then prevailing Sardar's views found much more popular support and by and large it was these views which were ultimately accepted except on one question, the return of Meos to their homeland in the *Jat* areas of Punjab near Delhi, an area which had witnessed large-scale internecine incendiarism and bloodshed in the summer of 1947.

The Kashmir problem was another source of conflict. Temperamentally, on matters of dispute with Pakistan, Sardar was firm and unyielding though he did not, except in matters of vital importance, trouble himself with details on which Panditji and Gopalaswamy had their way without interference from him. There is also no doubt that there was an undercurrent of militancy in Sardar's approach; militancy was, however, not synonymous with bellicosity or war-mongering but arose from a realisation that that was the only language which Pakistan understood. It was also partly affected by some disillusionment over Pakistan's policies. As

his speeches showed he had in the beginning believed that Partition would not result in large-scale transfers of population and that Pakistan's attitude would necessarily be actively hostile; he thought that the partition would be as between two brothers. However, the systematic expulsion of minorities from West and East Pakistan began even before Independence but was drastically accelerated afterwards. Junagadh and Kashmir not only disillusioned but also embittered him. He then felt that the relationship had gone beyond any possibilities of adjustment and that the question was one of the security and integrity of the country. On this there could be no compromise.

As regards the tribal raids on Kashmir, he was not prepared to regard it any less than a declaration of war and began to look upon Pakistan virtually as an enemy. In that context he was opposed to the parleys in which, egged on by Lord Mountbatten, Pandit Nehru was participating. In fact at one stage, when Lord Mountbatten feverishly tried to arrange a meeting between Pandit Nehru and Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan at Lahore, he consistently opposed the idea with a vehemence bordering on aggressiveness, but was overruled. Eventually he did not conceal his delight at the failure of the attempt due to Pandit Nehru's indisposition. Although, barring the initial question of accession, Sardar was not actively associated with the initiation or direction of policies on Kashmir in its international aspect—it was dealt with largely between Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar and his intervention was confined to discussions in the meetings of the Cabinet or consideration of draft communications to Pakistan or other countries—he had still some initiative in the internal problem of Kashmir. There also, however, he came into conflict with Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar owing to the personal rift between the Maharaja and Sheikh Abdullah. It can scarcely be denied that the latter wanted the Maharaja's head on the charger and taking advantage of a wrong assessment by Pandit Nehru and Gopalaswamy Ayyangar of the extent of his influence in the Valley he literally wanted to dictate his own terms. Sardar had shrewdly come to the conclusion that Sheikh Abdullah would not be able to deliver the goods in the event of a plebiscite which, thanks to Lord Mountbatten, was the ruling consideration at the time. Consequently he did not wish to put all his eggs in the Abdullah basket. He was in favour of exploiting the influence of the Maharaja as well—an influence which certainly prevailed in the case of a substantial section of the population of Jammu and was not negligible in the Valley. He was not, therefore, in favour of weakening the Maharaja too much which was inevitable if he was reduced to a nonentity which was the only alternative to removal, so far as Sheikh was concerned.

On the question of the external aspect of the Kashmir problem, I have already narrated the incident of Pandit Nehru's broadcast from the All-India Radio in which Sardar wanted to avoid a reference to the U.N. Auspices. Sardar was not opposed to a plebiscite; but he felt that it was not

practical politics to talk of it as long as Pakistan's aggression was a daily occurrence. So long as Pakistan's armed intervention persisted in Kashmir Sardar was firm on settling the dispute on the battle-field rather than through parleys in the U.N. Security Council. In this matter he found himself completely opposed to the line of action and policies adumbrated by Lord Mountbatten who was successful in persuading not only Pandit Nehru but also Gandhiji to accept them. Mountbatten diverted the mind of Pandit Nehru in two directions—conferences with Pakistan and a reference to the U.N. For the latter he secured Gandhiji's blessing. Faced with this combination, Sardar found in quiet acquiescence the only refuge from open conflict. Again, on the question of the payment of Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan which was obligatory under the Partition arrangement, Sardar was uncompromising. He had authentic information that financially Pakistan was in a bad shape, that the payment would bolster up its economy and contribute to its fighting potential and that there was no doubt that the payment would be converted into the much needed sinews of war and used directly against India. He forcefully put forward his point of view and was supported by Shyama Prasad Mookerji, Gadgil and Ambedkar. Pandit Nehru also accepted it. It was therefore decided to withhold the payment.

Mountbatten was not, however, reconciled to the decision of his Council of Ministers and with somewhat doubtful propriety indicated his views in rather strong terms to Gandhiji. Sardar's impression was that Mountbatten told Gandhiji something to the effect that with holding of the amount would be tantamount to dishonesty. That was enough to rouse Gandhiji's moral conscience and he enquired of Pandit Nehru what the position was. The latter, notwithstanding the fact that he was a party to the decision, appears to have told Gandhiji that he also had his doubts but since Sardar felt so strongly about it, the Cabinet took the decision accordingly. This was in spite of the fact that he himself had expressed the view that we would not give funds to finance the war. Sardar on learning this from Gandhiji felt deeply hurt that he had been let down by his Chief but he stuck to the position and gave way only after Gandhiji made an issue of it at the time of his fast. But inwardly Sardar reeled under the blow and was considerably embittered. Even at the Cabinet meeting Sardar broke down when the decision was taken to make the payment.

In the meantime, apart from the distance between Pandit Nehru and Sardar and the tension that had developed, the latter's speeches during the tour that ended on 7 January 1948, particularly those he delivered at Calcutta and Lucknow became the subject of conversation in Delhi and received adverse comments in Pandiit Nehru's circle and in Maulana Azad's dovecotes. The *Jamiat* leaders, among whom Maulana Hifzulrehman and Maulana Sayeed were very prominent, were up in arms. Gandhiji's time these days was largely monopolised by these adversaries of Sardar and Pandit Nehru's representative at Gandhiji's Court, Mridula Sarabhai, was also very active in the cause. The result was that the atmo-

sphere in Gandhiji's camp was also surcharged by adverse reaction. Sardar was questioned by Gandhiji about the line he had adopted in these speeches and stuck on his guns. The situation in Delhi was also causing Gandhiji's grave anxiety; he was hearing stories daily about Muslims being forced out of one quarter or the other by the refugees. At one stage Gandhiji decided to make his abode in the Turkman Gate area but was dissuaded from pursuing the idea further by Sardar who became genuinely apprehensive of his safety due to the angei roused among refugees by his outspoken sympathy for the Muslims and the attempts that were being made in his name to prevent the exit of Muslims and to facilitate their return.

During one of the discussions between Gandhiji and Sardar, Gandhiji hinted at the growing dissatisfaction which Pandit Nehru experienced at the trend of his speeches, his so-called anti-Muslim attitude and at the differences between himself and Sardar. Gandhiji said that it seemed to him that Pandit Nehru and Sardar could not get on with each other and that it might become necessary for one of them to quit the Government. Pandit Nehru had made it clear to Gandhiji that he would himself like to go and leave Sardar to run the Government. Gandhiji put this to Sardar. Sardar told him that if anyone had to go, it would be himself, that he was not enamoured of office and that he would feel happier doing constructive work which had been his forte all along but that before he left he would make him the gift of the unification of Kathiawar on which Gandhiji had set his heart. It was after this discussion that Gandhiji launched upon his famous fast and gave it up when the decision to withhold the payment of Rs. 55 crores had been reversed and he was assured by Indian leaders of communal peace. The situation then calmed down on the surface but below it, many an anguished heart still retained the after-effects of the post-Partition venom and this resentment and bitterness would erupt off and on, sometimes even in Gandhiji's prayer meetings.

Sardar had already sensed that between him and Pandit Nehru a brick-wall of difference and misunderstanding had been raised. He now found that even Gandhiji did not seem to like the free and frank expression of his views on the many problems that beset the country and called for urgent and straightforward solution. The last straw was the decision of Gandhiji to undertake a fast, particularly since many in the opposite camp referred to him as its main cause. He had to swallow a bitter pill when against his better judgement and strong conviction, he had to agree to reverse the decision about the payment of Rs. 55 crores to Pakistan. Sardar account; felt sore about Mountbatten's part in it. He accordingly made up his mind to part company with Panditji and embarked on a tour of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Kathiawar partly to fulfil some old commitments and partly to be in the close vicinity in order to assist V. P. Menon who was negotiating with Kathiawar Rulers for the integration of Kathiawar consisting of 217 States and Estates. The state of his mind

during this tour is amply borne out by his speeches referred to earlier. There is in them a deep mental auguish; he was clearly doing some soul searching. However, so far as his attitude on matters which had drawn adverse comments from Gandhiji and Pandit Nehru was concerned, he was quite unrepentent. Before departing on this tour in the middle of January, he wrote a letter in Gujarati to Gandhiji explaining his position and conveying his decision to resign his office on his return from the tour and pledging himself to present him with the gift of the unification of Kathiawar before he quit office. It was during this tour that he heard of the bomb explosion on 20 January 1948 at Gandhiji's prayer meeting at Birla House. He felt anxious and rushed back to Delhi.

In the meantime, Mountbatten came to know that Gandhiji was at Pandit Nehru's instance considering the proposition of Sardar's resignation. When Gandhiji mentioned it to him he told him point-blank that it would be a most unwise step. In the prevailing atmosphere in the country both Pandit Nehru and Sardar had to work together and Pandit Nehru could not do without Sardar. In fact, he is reported to have told Gandhiji that between the two, Sardar's feet were more firmly planted on the ground. It was after this timely intervention of the Governor-General that Gandhiji was convinced of the continuance of the joint Nehru-Patel team. Therefore, after Sardar returned from his tour and before he left for Patna on 25 January 1948, Gandhiji hinted to him his change of mind when Sardar called on him to persuade him to a tightening of security measures at the prayer meeting. (Gandhiji firmly and resolutely turned down Sardar's suggestion that visitors to the prayer meeting should be searched and special protection and escort be given to him during his walk to the prayer meeting. Sardar had seen this chink in the security armour and therefore accepted a scheme of protection agreed upon between W.C. Mehra, of the Delhi Police who was concerned with Gandhiji's security and Sanjeevi who was then both Director, Intelligence Bureau and Inspector General of Police, Delhi. Sardar had promised to take up the matter with Gandhiji but on his return he told them of his failure to convince Gandhiji and his helplessness to do anything more. He emphasised the need to them for the maximum degree of vigilance.)

When Gandhiji referred to his change of mind, Sardar listened to him quickly but did not indicate his own views. He told Gandhiji that in view of the recent past, it was essential that he should talk it out with him in detail. Gandhiji agreed and asked him to come after his return from Patna. Sardar, however, pointed out to him that whenever he came he found him surrounded by people who, if not his enemies, were not his friends either and that no talks would be fruitful in such surroundings. The talks had to be held in a calm and cool atmosphere and should be a heart to heart discussion. Gandhiji saw his point, enquired when he was returning from Patna and then fixed the meeting at that fateful hour preceding his assassination on 30 January 1948.

Sardar returned from this talk with Gandhiji in a better frame of mind, somewhat happier but still not completely relieved. He therefore, left for Agra, Lucknow and Patna with a lighter heart. Little did he know than that the sands of time were running out and the time was drawing near when on the one side the clouds that had come between him and Gandhiji would be lifted but on the other the glory would be short-lived and Gandhiji would have to pay for his convictions with his life.

At Agra, Sardar halted for a day and staying at Circuit House, had a very beautiful glimpse of the Taj in the distance. He later saw it at close quarters and visibly impressed, he felt proud of this peerless legacy of history.

The manner in which Sardar could, even after so many years, like a true Captain of his forces, not only recognise but also exchange a few ideas and pleasantries with his former comrades, was brought home to me when Seth Achal Singh, the leading light of the Agra Congress came to call on him. Achal Singh's proportions, his bearing, his distinctive moustache and his gait were all very impressive as only a U.P. *Thakur's* could be. Gavind Ballabh Pant and C.B. Gupta were also there and Sardar exchanged with them, and with Pant in particular, his ideas on recent developments. The latter had somehow learnt about Sardar's idea of resignation and was very nervous at the prospect. He seemed to share Sardar's views more than those of Pandit Nehru on the current situation and the crisis which faced the country. Not only were they both comrades but were together with Gandhiji at the crucial Tripuri Congress and also during the working of the Parliamentary programme. He was greatly relieved when Sardar told him about the altered prospect of his continuance in office.

At Patna we were welcomed with eclat. Shri Krishna Sinha, Anugraha Narain Singh, and Satya Narain Sinha, the last of whom was a close confidant and devoted lieutenant of Sardar were at the airport and we were all of guests of Shri Krishna Sinha. Bihar had a strong Congress organisation at the time but was beset with the problem of abolition of *zamindari*--a problem made more difficult because the land-magnates enjoyed the benefits of the Permanent Settlement and there was practically no village revenue administration. Moreover some of the *zamindars* like the Maharajas of Darbhanga, Dumraon and Ramgarh were regarded with the same reverence and enjoyed the same prestige and position in the public eye as Rulers of the Indian State. There was no difficulty about Sardar accepting the principle of abolition; he was not only wedded to it but had insisted on it. He was, however, in favour of payment of fair and equitable compensation to the *zamindars* whereas the Provincial Cabinet had decided to pay them only three times the net revenue, subject to a maximum of Rs 35 lakhs. This ceiling meant in some cases that the *zamindars* would not get even one year's net revenue. Sardar was very critical of this scheme and forthrightly criticised the Cabinet for taking this decision at a public meeting, likening the assumption of *zamindaris* under such a scheme to brigandage. This made Shri

Krishna Sinha uncomfortable but Sardar succeeded in mollifying him and he agreed to revise the scheme of compensation. Sardar returned to Delhi on the 28 January and made the usual courtesy call on Gandhiji. The visit was brief but the duration was enough for Gandhiji to indicate his view that he had become even more convinced of the need for Sardar and Pandit Nehru to work together.

Twelve

A Fateful Day

SARDAR RETURNED from Patna full of confidence that he would be able to retrieve his position with Gandhiji. The excitement following the bomb outrage on 20 January had died down and Birla House and its environment seemed to breathe an air of normalcy. The stricter security arrangements were in operation. Delhi, though becoming every day more crowded with refugees who were exerting pressure for their rehabilitation, did not present any turbulent aspect. Nevertheless, one could see angry men in the vicinity of Birla House and sense some uneasiness and tension at Gandhiji's prayer meetings. Nobody, however expected that any of the refugees, however bitter or venomous they might be after the experience they had undergone on both sides of the frontier would seriously attempt violence against the person of Gandhiji. It is, I think, a tribute to the tolerance of that sorely troubled and discontented section of Delhi's population that no danger seemed to threaten Gandhiji from that quarter.

The danger came, however, from a place far removed from that cauldron of simmering and boiling discontent. The heart of that danger lay in the same area in which nearly forty years earlier and in association with emotionally roused young men of the Punjab, another set of young men out of patriotism and a sense of nationalism had organised a violent conspiracy against the wrong perpetrated by the British. While one limb of that group showed a remarkable capacity for restraint in the changed circumstances, the other, without any concern for developments that were taking place elsewhere, was so roused as to entertain murderous designs on the prophet of non-violence, who had on so many occasions succeeded in transforming a poisonous atmosphere into one in which the Indian people could breathe freely.

That hard core was a bastion of orthodoxy and extreme communalism combined with almost criminal intelligence and mischievous secrecy. What was worse, it was imbued with distorted partiotism which engendered an imaginary but fanatical concept of national obligation and religious duty. The result was a deep-seated, warped outlook which defied reason or persuasion and which flourished in preconceived notions, assumed grievances and irremovable prejudices. It would have been easy to credit such a set of people with evil designs against a foreign power but almost unthinkable to do so against the meek and non-violent servant of humanity and votary of truth and non-violence that Gandhiji was. It is true

that signs of the existence of such a group were manifest but it would have needed a seer with divine eyes to forecast even in the last week of January 1948 that within a few days that core of fanaticism would take the toll of such a precious life, particularly after the nation had heaved a sigh of relief following the termination of Gandhiji's fast as a result of a concordat between the leaders of the two communities in Delhi.

Consequently, when Sardar went to Birla House on the 28 January afternoon he hardly sensed any presentiment of that lurking danger though there was no question of taking any chances. He assessed for himself the arrangements that had been put into effect prior to his departure for Patna and on the basis of reports from Sanjeevi and W.C. Mehra, he felt reassured that as far as it was possible to guard Gandhiji without screening the visitors, adequate steps had beed taken. The Achilles heel in these arrangements was, of course, there but there seemed remote chance of any one getting so close as to break or overshoot the cordon or security ring that was placed at his prayer meetings or round Brila House. The next two days were therefore days of calm and tranquillity, so far as Sardar was concerned. With the prospect of a change in his relations with Gandhiji there was a certain buoyancy in the air. The usual preoccupations of morning walks, interviews, attendance at the assembly session and guests at lunch and dinner filled the days. The only unusual occurrence was the Press Conference which Sardar convened and addressed on 29 January 1948, at which he explained his policy and achievements in the States Ministry. His speech provided an insight into the working of his mind at the time and indicated the foresight, statesmanship and inspiration under which he had formulated and implemented his policies. It is significant and also symptomatic of the comparative calm at that time that hardly any questions were put forward at the Conference on the law and order situation or the refugee problem or the security measures for Gandhiji. This is the typical attitude of our country which wakes up to a reality in a sudden outburst of emotions and then relapses into a strange quietude.

30 January dawned like any other, cold, sunny and bustling with activity, with no unusual ferment or tension to presage the tragedy with which it was to end. Both at Birla House and at 1, Aurangzeb Road the same daily routine was being pursued. Sardar had an early visitor of some importance, Margaret Bourke-White of Life Magazine who went out for a walk with him at 6 a.m. and then stayed on to partake of tea and fruits. After the morning's business was over, he went to attend the Assembly Session. He returned home for lunch at which he had as his guest Patrick Gordon-Walker, Parliamentary Secretary in the Labour Cabinet and an American journalist. At the lunch he again went to the Council House to attend the Assembly. From there he proceeded straight to Birla House at 4 p.m. and was closeted with Gandhiji till 5.10 p.m. The same old warmth and familiarity had returned. The atmosphere was one of mutual love and understanding as of old. In a few minutes the recent

past filled with clouds of misunderstanding was reviewed only to be forgotten. The clouds had lifted and a burst of sunshine and mirth filled the room. Referring to the letter of resignation which Sardar had submitted and the general feeling that a parting of the ways between him and Pandit Nehru had come, Gandhiji stated categorically that without both working together things could not go on and that both had to remain in the Government. He told Sardar that the three of them would talk it over the next day and settle everything. It was after a long time that Gandhiji and Sardar had had a frank, cordial and openhearted discussion and there was complete identity of views and mutual trust and confidence. Time was flying but without either of them being aware of it. Neither of them knew that it was their last meeting. Both had taken time and life for granted. During the discussions Gandhiji had his meal of milk, vegetables and an orange. At 5.10 p.m. Gandhiji's daughter-in-law reminded them of the time and the hour and the two took leave of each other with the promise of meeting on the morrow.

Gandhiji began to get ready for going to the prayer meeting and Sardar and Maniben left for 1, Aurangzeb Road. During this time I decided to visit my house for a few minutes. Sardar had sent his car to me to come to his house and I was getting ready to do so. Suddenly the telephone bell rang and Maniben in a distressed tone told me about the grim tragedy that had been perpetrated by the assassin's bullet and asked me to repair post-haste to Birla House. I was aghast and taken aback. The ground seemed to slip from beneath my feet and it took me some time to recover. When I reached Birla House, the whole place was in a state of confusion, whispers and rumours as to what had happened, who had done it and who had been caught began to spread and the story was repeated endlessly with additions in the process. As I went inside I found Gandhiji lying insensible but serene, Sardar sitting in stony silence at his feet, flanked by Maniben, Pandit Nehru and Devdas Gandhi, all of them grief-stricken, the one crying silently and the other unable to contain his sorrow. Recitations from the Bhagavad Gita were being read out by Gandhiji's shocked entourage as well as Sarla and Premvada, two daughters-in-law of the Birla household. Soon after, the place was filled by a distinguished crowd consisting of the Governor-General, Cabinet Ministers and Sir Roy Bucher the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. I found out from Maniben the way in which news of Gandhiji's assassination had reached Sardar. He had hardly reached 1, Aurangzeb Road and sat down in the drawing room for the usual study of newspapers which arrived from all over the country, when Brij Kishan Chandiwala, one of Gandhiji's entourage came out of a car crying and shouting for Sardar and saying that Bapu had been shot and killed. Maniben questioned him and gave Sardar the tragic news. Sardar got up with a sense of shock and immediately left for Birla House in Brij Kishan's car. I also learnt from the Birla House gardener who was at the scene of the tragedy of what had happened and was particularly enraged at the assassin employing the ruse

of paying his respects to carry out his criminal act. In the meantime, a mischievous rumour had gained some currency that the assassin was a Muslim. Naturally, we promptly helped to contradict this.

The actual details of the assassination have been told so often and been the subject of a judicial trial that they do not need repetition here. Suffice it to say that the whole incident had occurred within a few minutes of Sarda's parting with Gandhiji, that the assassin had exploited the only chink in his security armour, the refusal to get his visitors screened and to be accompanied by security men during his walk to the prayer meeting and that the assassin had committed his cowardly and dastardly act by catching Gandhiji off his guard. Even at the time of his instant apprehension he had given evidence of his complete indifference to the saintly life, the lamp of which he had extinguished in such foul manner, and of his fanaticism nursed in that sinister school of culpable orthodoxy referred to earlier.

Back in the precincts of Birla House, while still in the presence of Gandhiji's lifeless body, Mountbatten was quick to seize the occasion to bring together the two top leaders. In the hour of national tragedy and emergency they forgot all their petty differences and again became devoted comrades. What Gandhiji wanted to secure whilst living, his death secured in a few minutes. After the initial shock, both went to the A.I.R. studio in the Broadcasting House to address the Nation—Panditji in English, Sardar in Hindi, the former reading out a text which was later translated into Hindi, the latter speaking extempore in simple Hindustani. Both expressed their sense of stock and grief and advised the Nation to bear the tragedy with fortitude and to rise to the height of the tragedy rather than succumb to it. Next, both of them left for the Prime Minister's residence. They were joined by Sir Roy Bucher with whom they discussed the route of the funeral procession. Deshbandhu Gupta and Raghunandan Sharan, leaders of the Delhi Congress, who had joined the discussion suggested that the procession should be taken through the city. Panditji's reply was characteristically forthright : 'Do you want to turn it into a *Tamasha*' ?

Sardar returned to his residence about midnight and went to bed after a telephonic discussion with Balasaheb Kher, the Bombay Priemer to whom he gave instructions for an immediate investigation into the conspiracy and apprehension of the guilty persons. Sleep, that blissful state of forgetfulness, however eluded him. He was awake and restless, contemplating no doubt both the long companionship which had come to such a tragic close, the almost death-bed reconciliation which held promise of a bright morrow and the fell tragedy which dashed that hope to the ground.

While arrangements for the funeral were being discussed, there was quite a controversy as to the appropriateness of a State funeral with such an obvious military bias for the apostle of non-violence who had a *charkha* as the weapon of his crusade, a loin-cloth for his uniform and a

soft voice to command with, but was nevertheless the cynosure of million of eyes both in their country and outside, the slender hope of down-trodden hummanity and the lone beacon-light of peace on earth and love among mankind. Ultimately, a decision was made in favour of mounting the dead body on a truck. Sardar sat besides it, his face shrouded in grief, yet giving no outward expression of it except for the drawn lines on it. The funeral procession, its progress under military escort, the scenes of grief that accompanied it and the tremendous rush of the vast gathering as the flames consumed the mortal frame of the Saint of Sabarmati are now part of recorded history. When discussions were held about the post obsequies ceremonies the suggestion was made by, I think, Devdas Gandhi that the ashes and bones should be disturbed all over the country for immersion in its different rivers and subsequently a Memorial be built at Rajghat on the main part of those relics. Sardar did not approve of these on the ground that all these ostentatious proceedings would be contrary to Gandhiji's own oft-expressed wishes in the matter and to his philosophy and that a memorial would have been the last thing he would have liked. Once he even added that Gandhiji's frail body could not contribute so many bones as to suffice for immersion in more than a few rivers apart from the substantial part that would be reserved for Rajghat and that there was no point in deceiving the subsequent generations that the Memorial enshrined a part of his remains. But Sardar was overruled and the monuments are as much a tribute to Gandhiji's memory as they are an evidence of disregard of his wishes. In the latter aspect, of course, they do not stand alone.

Gandhiji's death shocked the whole country into an awareness of the critical situation which faced it after Partition. The top leaders also realised that they must work in a united endeavour to lift the country out of the morass of costly controversies into which it had sunk so soon, after paying such a heavy price for a prolonged and fundamental dispute affecting the very unity of the country. I have already referred to the conciliatory mood which Gandhiji had induced into Sardar a few minutes before his assassination. Mountbatten had brought Sardar and Pandit Nehru together at Gandhiji's death-bed. Both had broadcast to the nation together thereby emphasising in no uncertain terms their mutual dependence on each other and the country's dependence on them. The spirit of understanding and friendship in a moment of crisis was not lost in the succeeding weeks though again it was affected by a very threatening episode, to which I shall refer later. Sardar was undoubtedly stunned by the tragedy; what was worse was that he kept most of the grief and shock to himself; it seemed that he bled internally with grief but merely had a grim countenance, from which the usual relieving smile seemed to have vanished forever. He seemed inwardly however, to collect his thoughts and to measure his steps with a watchful regard for Pandit Nehru's attitude.

The memory of accusations against him as being responsible for

Gandhiji's fast was still fresh in his mind. Those who were actively hostile to him and tried to poison Gandhiji's ears were still on the move now ascribing Gandhiji's assassination to the lack of adequate precautions for his safety. They had now transferred their daily congregations to the Prime Minister's house but did not enjoy the same degree of access and freedom as they had in Birla House. Pandit Nehru also had by now had sufficient time to turn the developments over in his mind and had completely fallen in line with Gandhiji's wish. During the next two days the old familiarity between the two leaders which had been interrupted by the distance that had developed in recent months had again revived. Moreover, with Gandhiji no longer available for support and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad not being exactly in tune with the atmosphere in the country, Pandit Nehru with his constant need for someone to lean on, found Sardar the only person who could give him strength and support.

Thus one fine morning Sardar received a very affectionate and almost brotherly letter from Panditji written in his own hand. The letter recalled their long association in the Congress during which they had differed but still worked side by side. It also referred to recent unfortunate differences which had developed between them but which should not make any difference to their working together as of old. It alluded to the situation which had overtaken them after Gandhiji's death and emphasised the need for working together in the same old spirit of dedication and teamwork. In short it was a letter which was intended to wipe out the unpleasant memories of the recent past, to revive the older more pleasant memories and to raise new hopes of close and cordial collaboration in the national cause. Sardar reciprocated fully in the same spirit and the chapter of misunderstanding appeared to have come to a close.

But the placidity of their relationship was momentarily disturbed by an unfortunate incident. Those days Jaya Prakash Narayan, a man of undoubted ability, intelligence and standing among the socialists, was enjoying the hospitality of the Prime Minister's House. Unfortunately he organised a campaign against Sardar for the inadequacy of the precautions taken to safeguard Gandhiji's life. The campaign took the form both of press statements and public speeches. He sought to organise a demonstration march on 3 February with a view to leading a deputation to the Assembly which was in session. At Sardar's instance a discussion had been taken some months back to prohibit during the Assembly sessions, demonstrations and processions within a radius of two miles of the Council House. The procession which Jaya Prakash Narayan was leading was accordingly stopped by the police. In anger and out of chagrin he telephoned me and protested against the stoppage of the precession. Sardar was then inside the Assembly. I told him that Sardar would not be available as he could not be disturbed during his presence in the House. He accused Sardar of high-handedness and suppression of civil liberties and wanted his reaction to be conveyed to Sardar which I tactfully agreed to do. The procession then dispersed. When Sardar heard

of the incident he telephoned Pandit Nehru pointing out the undesirability of Jaya Prakash Narayan indulging in these activities from the shelter of the Prime Minister's household.

Mridula Sarabhai who was also enjoying the same shelter also actively assisted Jaya Prakash Narayan in his campaign to highlight the inadequacy of the precautions taken and Sardar's responsibility as Home Minister for this neglect. Sardar was deeply hurt at these developments, in fact he was stung to the quick and felt that probably Pandit Nehru shared these thoughts. Unknown to me, he wrote a letter to Pandit Nehru reminding him of his earlier resignation submitted to Gandhiji and saying that in view of Gandhiji's death he felt compelled to press his resignation. Maniben brought the letter to me for being despatched just as Sardar was getting ready to go to attend a Cabinet meeting. On reading the letter I lost my temper and exclaimed : 'I did not know Sardar was such a weakling.' Maniben, seeing me angry rushed back to Sardar who was just getting into his car and told him of my reaction. Sardar stopped short and after telling Maniben to ring up Panditji and say he was delayed came to my room and called me to his drawing room. There, silhouetted in one of the doors overlooking the spacious lawn, we discussed the situation. He started by saying : 'So you are angry with me.' I said, 'not exactly but I thoroughly dislike your attitude of submission to the agitation organised against you'. He then allowed me to proceed and I briefly surveyed the precautions taken and pointed out how his own personal efforts to persuade Gandhiji to accept the proposal of searching suspects and allowing policemen in plain clothes to make a ring round him as he proceeded to the preayer meeting had failed, as it had been stoutly opposed by Gandhiji who went to the point of threatening to go on a fast if anything of the kind was done. I pleaded that destiny had played its pranks with Gandhiji's life as it always does with even the most guarded personalities who succumb to the assassin's bullet, and that he should not play into the hands of those who wanted to engineer his own downfall so that they could replace him and then mould Pandit Nehru to their wishes. I pleaded that the country now more then ever needed the joint leadership which had saved it from dissection and civil war and which had pulled it through the most difficult times and that it would be a sad end to a long life of dedicated service to the motherland, if at this time of crisis, that joint leadership was rent asunder by the onslaught of designing and scheming individuals.

Sardar listened to me attentively and I knew I had driven the point home. He then referred to the activities of Jaya Prakash Narayan and Mridula Sarabhai. I told him that if he so wished, I could counter it successfully. I told him that the country had not yet been told the whole story. He could make a statement in the House in reply to a short notice question and with the help of Durga Das I could get a factual account published in the Press. Eventually he relented and asked me not to send the letter but to tear it to pieces. I complied with his first order but

exercised my own discretion about the latter and preserved it as a memento of the prevention of a great national tragedy. Having read some time earlier Philip Guedalla's book on the 'Ifs of History', I speculated in latter years as to what would have happened if Sardar had in fact resigned and gone back in retirement to Bombay or Ahmedabad.

I then busied myself in dealing with the campaign. Through the good offices of the Chief Whip Shri Satya Narain Sinha I arranged for a short notice question to be put to Sardar by Ananthashayanam Aiyyangar to which, after collecting the relevant facts, I drafted a reply which was approved by Sardar. In the meantime, the Party meeting was called the next day at which Sardar was so overcome by emotion that he could not speak for two minutes and then defended himself with an exposition of facts and expression of sentiments which made a great impression. This was followed by the question and answer referred to above. An article written by me anonymously also appeared in the papers. The result was quite effective and Jaya Prakash Narayan made his exit both from the Prime Minister's house and Delhi. It is a tribute to Sardar's objectivity that notwithstanding this episode, Jaya Prakash Narayan and his wife Prabhavati were always welcome and honoured guests at 1, Aurangzeb Road.

Though Sardar was greatly relieved at the blowing over of the crisis, he remained somewhat puzzled at the attitude of indifference which Pandit Nehru showed at these goings-on in his own house. Pandit Nehru in a broadcast had hailed Jaya Parkash as the future Prime Minister; he had not stopped him from campaigning against Sardar and had even invited him to the Party meeting on 8 February. Sardar for some time harboured the idea that the campigning could not have been done without some clandestine support by Pandit Nehru; I pleaded with him that Pandit Nehru sometimes gave an indication of a philosophical attitude towards such matters. Such an attitude was not necessarily an index of his mind. It was possible that it was but a demonstration of his attitude to liberty of action and not necessarily an instance of any approval to the course of action itself. I particularly utilised Pandit Nehru's spontaneous action in writing to him such an affectionate letter within a couple of days of Gandhiji's death. I also stressed that Pandit Nehru was a realist at times and could be expected to realise that Sardar was indispensable in the circumstances that prevailed and that their joint leadership was a necessity. I think I was able to remove the cobwebs of doubt and suspicion which had crept into his mind. In any case, after Jaya Prakash Narayan's exit, they died a natural death.

The most serious aftermath of Gandhiji's assassination was the banning of the activities of the R.S.S. The R.S.S. was a society founded by Shri Hedgewar with the general objective of uplift and reform of Hindu society, the propagation and preservation of Bharatiya culture and the reorganisation of Hindu society. It placed in the forefront the principles of discipline and obedience to authority (in the organisation), and

followed a programme of drills, flag salutation and service to Hindu society. There is no doubt that in the implementation of its programme it came into conflict with other religions with or without its seeking it. The history of Hindu religion bears instances of periodic attempts to reorganise it.

Hindu religion does not follow the pattern of a rigid set of beliefs woven together into a system under the inspiration of a prophet or preceptor. Starting from the belief in the divine inspiration of the Vedas, almost all subsequent stages in its development have been marked by considerable philosophising and evolution of practices, which are justified in terms of these philosophies. Throughout, religion and society have been more or less interdependent. Both religion and society have sometimes lapsed into corrupt or undesirable practices and there has been an organised attempt at reform supported and sustained by militant discourses and militant activities. Often the line between religion and society has been remarkably thin. Whatever may have been the shortcomings of this development, considering the long period of its existence of over 4000 years, the many changes that have taken place from time to time, the vast geographical area over which it has prevailed under varying conditions of isolation and communication and the many onslaughts it has suffered in its existence, it has preserved itself remarkably mostly in its pristine glory and ancient garb. In the process it has developed into a vast banyan tree giving shelter to its devotees. In this context, Hindu religion is a federation of beliefs, each set of beliefs enjoying virtually full autonomy and Hindu society is a vast kaleidoscope of heterogenous elements which are kept together more by mutual tolerance and coexistence than by any conscious attempt to be or remain together.

A religion of this type inevitably suffers from the attacks on its citadels by organised religions of a later day embodying comparatively simple sets of rules and beliefs, enforcing comformity more by rigidity of rules than by its philosophy and placed under an assumed divinely ordained authoritarianism. There is no doubt that both Hindu religion and society have often wilted under such attacks and pressures and periodically attempts have been made either to liberalise it or to close its ranks in order to meet the challenge. Sometimes even counter-attacks have been organised. The emergence of the Arya Samaj in the last century and the large-scale *Shuddhi* and *Sangathen* movement in the twenties of the present century are examples of such attempts. Both however, were virtually submerged by the national fervour that dominated the Indian scene after 1919. For a time, during the *Khilafat* and first non-co-operation movement, it seemed that religious differences resulting in conflicts were a thing of the past. However, Gandhiji and the Congress little realised the ephaneral nature of this unity which was followed by the triumph of religious orthodoxy and fanaticism over nationalism and liberalism. Some eminent leaders of the Congress and *Khilafat* subsequently turned into leaders of a spirit of communalism and a period of communal rioting ensued on a fairly widespread scale.

In the meantime, the problems sown by separate electorates in 1909 had germinated and were producing armed men in the political field. The poison spread to politics and even a nationalist leader of the record of Jinnah had to find refuge in the abandonment of his diluted nationalist programme, the promulgation of Two Nation Theory and a militant league programme. The result inevitably was not only a renewed political battle but also fratricidal and internecine conflicts among the Hindus and Sikhs on one side and Muslims on the other. These brought out much more prominently than at any other time the need for organisation of Hindu and Sikh societies to meet the militant challenge of communlism. The Congress, engaged in political battles both with the British Government and the League could hardly devote itself to these functions and consequently the R.S S. among the Hindus and the Akalis among the Sikhs forged ahead in both popular esteem and support. When Partition threatened the life and property of the vast population of Hindus and Sikhs on the other side of the frontier and correspondingly of Muslims on this side, the old animosities were revived and the need for organisation again impressed itself on certain sections of the people belonging to these faiths. Whatever the genesis of the troubles that afflicted both sides of the frontier in earlier and later parts of 1947, the fact remains that Hindus and Sikhs became aggressively defensive in their militancy. In these circumstances both the reputation and appeal of organised bodies among them became magnified and the R.S.S. being one of them claimed both more followers and more admirers.

Sardar always believed in the regeneration and re-organisation of Hindu society. He felt that Hindus as a whole were submissive and conciliatory and that they being the large majority of the population in the country, their overall backwardness, lack of organisation and discipline and their comparative inability to defend themselves against miscreants of other communities was a blot on their character. His concept was simply that of discipline, organisation and defensive preparations in the event of aggression on the part of other communities be they Muslim or others, and by no means did he harbour aggressive designs against other communities. He felt that if they were well-organised and disciplined they would cease to constitute an invitation to aggression and as such blunt the sharp edge of militancy of other communities. Moreover, disciplinarian and dedicated to national resurgence and reconstruction as he was, he felt that without the elimination of the many evils that had crept into Hindu society of which untouchability was the most glaring and pernicious, neither the community nor the country could be progressive in its outlook. All movements of healthy reform and constructive activity among Hindus extracted no less approbation from him than the constructive activities going on in the villages and community as a whole, which he had organised with such consummate skill in the whole of Gujarat. To the hero of Bardoli, which was a masterpiece of achievement in organisation, no lesser standard had an appeal. As between the different

communities constituting the Indian nation, he believed that the Hindu community with its preponderance needed no less attention than others. To the extent, therefore, that the R.S.S. fitted into this concept, it undoubtedly had his sympathy and support but to the content that it involved itself in a conflict with the Muslim or any other community, he did not hesitate to express his disapproval in private as well as in public as his utterances would show.

The part of the R.S.S. in the pre-Partition and post-Partition killings of Muslims in the Punjab, Delhi and its environs, West U.P. and parts of Rajasthan including Bharatpur and Alwar and later Madhya Bharat was and will remain a matter of controversy. I doubt whether there has been any clear-cut evidence of its active participation in these killings ; certainly there has been no evidence of such participation as a body. At the same time one cannot rule out the participation of hot-heads among them in collaboration with hot-heads among the Sikhs. My own tours with and without Sardar in the disturbed areas indicated a planned effort at wholesale massacres. Houses were marked with the community of their owners ; murders were committed wholesale and systematically and the whole undertaking seemed part of a well-organised plan. It was quite clear that the work was that of persons well-versed in the use of swords and other lethal weapons and therefore could not have been that of those drilled only in the peaceful fashion or trained in the use of lathis. I have no doubt that a large element consisted of regular miscreants and *goondas* who exploited a disturbed situation to quench their thirst for blood. They appeared to be totally devoid of all canons of neighbourly conduct and fellow-feeling.

In the face of this situation, Sardar could not convince himself that there was a case for banning the R.S.S., though he was under great pressure to do so. But later in the light of the investigations made into the activities of various individuals involed in Gandhiji's assassination and reported developments in Alwar and Bharatpur areas and around Gwalior, he could not resist the general outcry and called for action against the R.S.S. Hence its activities were banned. The ban was in operation for a period of six months and as far as my impression goes, the Head of the organisation Guru Golwalker instructed his followers not to defy the ban. The strength of the R.S.S. and its hold on the people were therefore not demonstrated at this juncture ; this exercise was left for the next occasion when it was declared in November 1948 to be an unlawful assembly and its Guru and members numbering about 25000 had to be put in jail. Sardar was struck by the number, which equalled if not surpassed the number of Congress volunteers who were in jail at any one time.

In the meantime, preparations were under way for the immersion of Gandhiji's ashes and bones in the sacred waters of the Triveni at the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna and the invisible Saraswati of Aryan times. Gandhiji's ashes were taken in a special train to Allahabad whilst others followed by train or by air. Sardar went by air and was

at Allahadad in time to be present at the Railway Station to receive the ashes. On alighting from the train, the ashes were taken ceremoniously to a waiting naval duck mounted on a truck. The procession consisting of a vast multitude several miles long, then made its way towards the Sangam. There most of the mortal remains of Gandhiji were consigned to the sacred waters. That was the first occasion after several years when I saw Panditji in his spotless Gandhi cap, kurta and dhoti, just he was when I first had a glimpse of him during the Kisan Sabha agitation days in my native town Partapgarh. After the ceremonies were over, we returned to the Government House and from there left by air for New Delhi. Thus ended the post-funeral ceremonies marking the tragic end of a life that was unique and of an individual who combined in him the past and the present in an idealistic mixture which at once entitled him to be called a prophet of simple living and high thinking and a dreamer of a golden age to come. Very often during those days I dwelt on Gandhiji's contribution to the building of the nation and to the forging of the national life and came to the conclusion that a great formative influence had passed into history.

On return from the immersion ceremony, Sardar steadied himself considerably and seemed to be his normal self. His first concern was to consolidate the great gain we had made in Saurashtra ; accordingly we proceeded on a tour of Saurashtra where he was to inaugurate the Saurashtra Union on 15 February at Jamnagar. It was a great occasion in which Royalty and commoners participated with equal zest and a complete sense of participation and dedication. There were however the usual flies in the ointment, which are to be found in our country on such auspicious occasions. The position of Samaldas Gandhi in the Cabinet became a matter of controversy. U.N. Dhebar, the Chief Minister did not wish to give him the Home portfolio on which Samaldas Gandhi had set his heart. Somehow Sardar patched up the matter. Sardar's speech at the Inauguration showed that the old spirit had returned. On the question of States he said:

> It is a matter for gratification that matters have shaped so well. With the lapse of Paramountcy, some sort of a vacuum had been created and the people have been concerned about their future. The amputation of a limb is a painful process but it is dreadful to imagine what would happen if the living organism itself was hacked to bits. Thanks to Providence, India today is alive and alert and has survived partition.

Referring to Gandhiji he said:

> I would also urge upon the new Government to eradicate untouchability from the social life of the people. Untouchability has been a curse against which Mahatma Gandhi battled throughout his life and Kathiawar should make a determined effort to remove that curse and thus pay an appropriate tribute to his memory. If the path chalked

out by him was pursued by the Princes and their subjects in Kathiawar, they would not only be setting a noble example for the coming generations.

The same day at a public meeting at Jamnagar he was more expansive. In that speech he referred to the objective of Mahagujarat. Gandhiji again came to his mind and he observed:

Mahatma Gandhi had been intensely interested in the unification of Kathiawar. As soon as he learnt of the agreement on the Covenent, he was anxious to meet the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. Mahatmaji did not seek merely the political unification of Kathiawar but its unity in every sense of the word. I ask the people to follow in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi in every walk of life, and, in particular to remove untouchability, bring about complete prohibition and foster inter-communal unity. That would be a real tribute to Mahatma Gandhi's love for Kathiawar.

Again at another function the next day he said:

Gandhiji preached and practised the philosophy of love and mutual tolerance. My long association with Gandhiji has taught me something of that lesson. It was my regard and esteem for the Rajpramukh, Jam Saheb, that won him over. And it was the same principle which won other Rulers as well. They have now surrendered their powers and great responsibility now rests on the people. By asking them to respect the institution of Rulers, I am not asking them to flatter the Rulers or cringe before them.

Many years ago I tried to win responsible Government for Rajkot. I had sought Gandhiji's blessing, but Gandhiji told me that the struggle would not be successful as long as the British remained in the country. Gandhiji knew that once the British left India, the traditions of mutual regard between the Princes and the people would be renewed, and the intimate and cordial relations which existed in ancient times between the Princes and the Panchayats of the people would be renewed. I appeal to the leaders of Saurashtra to so discharge their responsibilities as to be a shining example to the world.

Soon after Gandhiji's assassination, Alwar and Bharatpur had come into prominence. Sardar decided to visit the Matsya Union consisting of the States of Dholpur, Alwar, Bharatpur and Karauli. His speech at Alwar was tuned to the occasion. In an appeal to the Rulers to march with the times, he said:

Small States cannot subsist as independent entities any longer without endangering Indian unity. We are trying to achieve national unity. Many

Rulers have realised their duty by merging themselves to bigger entities. Rajasthan has to march with the times.

People and Rulers alike must realise that the old traditions of rule cannot be carried on. The times are changing, new ideologies and new traditions now hold the field. Our power is not going to relex merely because there are some people who still dream of the power of their sword and still think of carving out a kingdom for themselves.

Emphasising the need of safeguarding our hardwon freedom he said:

I wonder whether people appreciate that they would not be able to safeguard the freedom they have won if the signs that are already visible persist in their fateful course. Freedom was not won by the sword and will not be protected by guns alone. Guns can protect freedom from aggressive designs of neighbours or other foreign Statas. But internally, it is the honest core of people and the true realisation of the responsibilities of a free citizen that alone can save freedom from the machinations of self-seeking and interested parties and individuals.

In the light of recent happening in this area, he gave this exhortation:

It is the duty of the majority community to protect the minority whose interests, as it were, come as part of a trust to the former. Muslims, after all, number only four crores. Hindus about thirty crores. It is incumbent on them, therefore, to protect the Muslims in India.

In the meantime, Sardar had a meeting with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and the two talked candidly about their recent differences and the manoeuvres to make Sardar leave the Cabinet. However, the reference to the part was intended only to emphasise the needs of the present. The two leaders, realists as they were, appriciated the fact that old animosities must be buried and that the future lay in collaboration and not in confrontation.

It was in the same mood of recollection of the past and gauging the needs of the future that Sardar met Devdas Gandhi. It was a meeting packed with emotion as it was the first long session he had with Devdas Gandhi after Gandhiji's death. Events leading to that tragedy came up for discussion in which the episode of Sardar's resignation figured prominently.

It became evident that Sardar had been greatly affected by the events both prior to and after the assassination. Although he had faced the tragedy stoically inwardly he appeared to be crying within himself. This great emotional strain and the events of the first ten days after Gandhiji's death had taken a heavy toll, and he suffered an attack of coronary thrombosis on 5 March 1948. The actual scene of the attack is still fresh in my mind. Sardar, Dr. Sushila Nayyar Maniben and myself had sat down to lunch. Soup had been served. Whilst drinking it, we found Sardar suddenly lapsing into silence with his right hand over his heart. We looked at him

and he appeared pale and distressed. Sushila Nayar asked him what the matter was and he said that he was having an agonising pain. She then helped him to get up and took him to his room where she laid him on his bed. Sushila Nayar knew that he was having an attack of coronary thrombosis and she immediately rang up Dr. P. C. Dhanda who rushed to Sardar's bed-side. We were all greatly upset and nervous. Dr. Dhanda administered morphia injections and Sardar went off to sleep. We summoned Drs.Gilder and Nathubhai Patel from Bombay and the usual treatment for such ailments began. He was prescribed six weeks complete rest. The Prime Minister was informed immediately of the attack and he visited Sardar. He volunteered to look into Sardar's work. He asked me to see him with the papers and to take his instructions. This I did for the next six weeks and I must say that it was a pleasure to work for him. Pandit Nehru was very considerate. Once or twice he was annoyed over some views which I expressed. But after initial shock of his annoyance was over, I explained matters to him, and he had no hesitation in accepting my views. I had felt earlier somewhat nervous about working with him as I had seen him lose his temper with his Private Secretary, Tarlok Singh, more than once. However, I never had that experience during the six weeks that I had the privilege of taking orders from him. Sardar, as soon as he was free from the effects of tranquillisers, began to take an interest in his work and displayed considerable curiosity in what was going on. But under instructions from doctors and Pandit Nehru, he had to be satisfied with the minimum of exertion. As his condition began to improve he took more and more interest in his work though most of the time he was in bed and it used to be a problem for me to avoid straining him beyond permissible limits. As he got better he began to get visitors within prescribed hours. His illness had of course been a national events and solicitous enquiries poured in from all over the country. They were all relieved to hear that he had survived the serious attack and that he was making good progress towards recovery.

Thirteen

Illness and After: Increased Tempo of Integration

DURING SARDAR'S illness many crucial problems came up for solution and although the doctors had prescribed complete rest, his restless spirit and enthusiasm got the better of him. From his sick bed he would insist on being kept in touch and even take important decisions. Pandit Nehru was a daily visitor and to a large extent succeeded in keeping him informed. But every day of rest and comparative inactivity proved increasingly irksome to him. Fortunately, he maintained good progress and it was decided that as soon as possible he should shift to a more equable climate at a reasonable height—not more than 3,000 ft. Unfortunately, however, the restriction on the height was changed on the advice of Dr. B C. Roy. Sardar had acquired a love for Mussoorie where he went for a brief ten days in the previous year and was eagar to repeat the visit. Dr. Roy saw no objection and in fact approved of the idea though Dr. Gilder and Dr. Nathubhai Patel were sceptical. Sardar thus threw caution to the winds and we prepared ourselves for a prolonged stay in Mussoorie or alternatively in Dehra Dun.

Meanwhile, events were moving rapidly. The tempo of integration was in full swing. V. P. Menon and his untiring team were busy negotiating with one Ruler after another for the integration of States. With the integration of Kathiawar States, Sardar had effected a change in his policy. He had had time to collect his thoughts during his illness and had asked me to put them to writing. That note, somewhere in March 1948, thenceforward formed the sheet anchor of developments in the States Ministry. Briefly stated, the policy made a shift from the previous concept of leaving viable States alone to that of integrating States into well-defined Unions with only two States out of the scheme, namely Hyderabad and Mysore which were left as they were.

In the meantime, affairs in Kashmir were taking a decisive turn. The decision to refer the issue to the U. N. had, as Sardar anticipated, boomeranged on us. Gopalaswami Ayyangar had failed to make an impression on the Security Council and which was dominated by power politics and an unholy alliance between the U. S. A. and U. K. The developments in the U. N. were causing Pandit Nehru and Sardar considerable anxiety. Internally matters were in a state of confusion. Immediately after accession, the Maharaja had his own Prime Minister in Mehr Chand

Mahajan; at the same time the direction of affairs had been taken over by the representatives of the National Conference led by Sheikh Abdullah with Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad as his Aide-in-Chief. The Maharaja was not inclined to withdraw from the scene. Though he had practically left the Kashmir Valley he was an important factor to be reckoned with in Jammu where his own community was in a position of strength and where the relief work among the refugees organised by himself and his tireless wife the Maharani, won the hearts of the people and made them increasingly popular.

This could not be to Sheikh's liking and his antipathy both to the Maharaja and Mehr Chand Mahajan became more open and hostile. The State was in a sorry plight being militarily in a state of recovery from the debacle of the previous, October-November and still in a state of confrontation at many points, internally it was involvd in an imbroglio between the Sheikh and the Maharaja. But the Sheikh sensed the situation well and found his cpportunity to press for a complete transfer of power and eclipse of the personality of Mehr Chand Mahajan. The latter was also fed up and convinced that a Chief Justice of the High Court was out of his depth in this triangle of power between the Maharaja, the Sheikh and the Centre. After a great deal of discussion and parleys it was decided that the Maharaja should be advised to issue a Proclamation transferring powers to the Sheikh and his colleagues with his own nominee as a member of the Cabinet. The Proclamation was drafted in the States Ministry in consultation with Mehr Chand Mahajan and approved by Pandit Nehru and Sardar. By that time both the Maharaja and Maharani had acquired some confidence in me and since Mehr Chand felt unequal to the task, he advised Sardar that I should be the bearer of the momentous tidings to the Maharaja. I pleaded with Sardar to spare me the ordeal; I said that I was his Private Secretary and not the executive and that Menon should handle the mission. Sardar retorted that I was also Joint Secretary in the Ministry of States with some responsibility for Kashmir Affairs. He also added that if he were well enough he would have himself undertaken the unpleasant task but that in his present state of health it was only proper that I should relieve him of that burden. Reluctantly I agreed. But the unpleasantness and the importance of the mission filled me with apprehension. Mehr Chand Mahajan was there, however, to accompany and help me but he refused firmly to break the news. It was thus left to me to initiate and conclude the diplomatic venture.

Before we left I was called by Pandit Nehru. He thought that I needed to be briefed on how to handle the situation. He spent nearly an hour on an exposition of the problem, the stakes involved, the key role which the Sheikh had to play in the event of a plebiscite, the delicacy of the situation in Jammu, full as it was of refugees and in the Valley, entirely hostile to any influx of refugees into their sheltered preserves, the personal factors involved and the paramount need for success of the mission. He was generous enough to say that he realised the difficulty and unpleasant-

ness of the task but impressed on me the inexorability of the demands of duty. I left him, determined to succceed and yet not fully confident that I would do so. He told me to see him again on my return from Jammu.

We reached Jammu by air rather late in the evening. We were ushered into our rooms. Mehr Chand Mahajan told me that he would assess the mood of the Maharaja and then let me know. The Maharaja was anxious to know the nature of our mission. Mehr Chand Mahajan put him off by saying that I had been sent by Sardar to have a confidential talk with him on his behalf. That set him at ease and it was agreed that I should see on his next morning. When I met him the next day he was by himself and appeared to have had some inkling of what was to come. Gradually, after a survey of the situation and in the light of U.N. developments, I impressed upon him the need of a bold gesture to enable him and us to win over the Muslim population. I appealed to him to look at matters in the broader context of the country and the U.N. I also told him that if Sardar felt that his suggestion was not in the Maharaja's interest he would never have sent me to convey it. The conviction with which I spoke won him over and he asked me to explain to him the details, which I did. I pointed out that with his nominee there, both his presence and his point of view were secure. Eventually he fell in with the ideas and signed the Proclamation with some minor modifications. I undertook the responsibility of getting these modifications accepted after consulting Sardar through Maniben on the telephone. After a further half-hour of discussion with the Maharaja and Maharani whom I found sullen but not angry, I took leave and returned to Delhi. I reported back to Sardar and then to Panditji, both of whom were visibly relieved to hear that the great hurdle had been cleared and there was no danger of a crisis on this issue.

In the meantime, on the States' front, the line-up was proving somewhat difficult. The main preoccupations were the formation of the Patiala and Eastern Punjab States Union (PEPSU), the Madhya Bharat Union, and other negotiations of small-scale individual mergers as well as the formation of the smaller Unions of Matsya and Rajasthan. V.P. Menon was like a live wire, resourceful and tactful, and he worked hard and unremittingly with his team to add one triumph after another at a breathless pace. He reported to Sardar from time to time, taking inspiration from him and seeking a solution to any difficulties he faced. Between February and April he completed the formation of the Matsya Union consisting of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli, and two Rajasthan Unions one after the other in quick succession. The earlier one was centred round Kotah and the later one embracing the first was centred round, Udaipur. The last filled Sardar with particular satisfaction and pride. Sardar had a deep-seated reverence for the House of Mewar. He treated few rulers with so much veneration as a diminutive Maharana of Udaipur who returned the compliment fully. I shall reserve for a later occasion the account of his pilgrimage to Chittor and his homage to the memory of chivalrous martyrs of old. Here I would only like to add that

when S. V. Ramamurthy, the Prime Minister of Mewar met Sardar before the formation of the Rajasthan Union, the latter promised to ensure that the pre-eminence of the Maharana and of his illustrious House among the Rajasthan Rulers was preserved.

The Matsya Union, comprised of five Ruling Houses raised no special problems. However during the post partition period, three of the Ruling Houses along with the R.S.S. came in for suspicions but in all three cases the suspicions were found to be lacking in substance. The stories of their involvement in the unfortunate events were grossly exaggerated if not entirely untrue and may be attributed to a state of general panic and consternation. Alwar was a typical example of: 'Give a dog a bad name and hang him.' It is true that during the communal disturbances large-scale atrocities were perpetrated on the Muslim population, of whom many migrated to Pakistan. It is also deplorable that the famous mosque built by Akbar had been razed to the ground. But the worst feature of the State was that its Prime Minister N.B. Khare, with his Hindu Mahasabha past, had pronounced communal proclivities. With his influence over the Ruler, both the Ruler and he came under suspicion for R.S.S. sympathies. Discretion was never a strong point with them and some indiscreet utterances of theirs were quoted. The result was that much to the surprise and consternation of the Ruler, he was faced with a demand for handing over of the administration to the Government of India and the dismissal of Khare while he and Khare were confined to Delhi and an inquiry made into his conduct. He acquiesced in all the demands. During those days the Governor-General's residence was often the clearing house of all such information and V.P. Menon the conveyer of information, Sardar himself was on the defensive as well as inclined to let things take their course. He accordingly gave his consent.

The Maharaja of Bharatpur was similarly dealt with, except that he had no Prime Minister to keep him company. The Meo lobby was very active in Delhi. Through Mridula Sarabhai it had access both to Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji and after him to Vinoba Bhave. The latter was invited to Delhi by Shankar Rao Deo after Gandhiji's death more or less in the manner of Gandhiji's successor. On the Meo question Vinoba Bhave became a strong supporter of Pandit Nehru but a critic of Sardar. I do not think that the two ever met on cordial terms. As regards Dholpur, the Ruler had acquired a reputation for orthodoxy and traditionalism, partly because of his anti-accession role round about 15 August 1947. In fact, he found more congenial company in the Bhopal camp than with the overwhelmingly large group of his own co-religionists and Brother Princes in the accession camp. But the disillusionment caused by Bhopal's secret accession left him high and dry and he found in quiet submission the only means of rehabilitating himself.

Rewa and the Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand States did not prove an easy proposition. Rewa's ex-Maharaja Gulab Singh had come to grief in British days. He was feudal to the core and despite many sins of omission

and commission was intensely popular. His young son, the present Maharaja though different from his father was of a submissive nature and not every communicative. The Rulers of this area had a chequered history of predatory forages, remarkable chivalry and bold daring. The exploits of Bir Singh Deo to whom Prince Salım entrusted the task of the dastardly murder of Abul Fazl were well-known and the martial epic of Alha and Oodal still formed the pride of their achievements. The Ruler of Panna at the time was a very able, well-respected and popular Prince who could be won over by persuasion. V. P. Menon succeeded in bringing order out of chaos and Vindhya Pradesh Union was formed with Rewa as the centre.

Rajasthan Union proved comparatively easy though when V. P. Menon discussed it with Sardar he felt somewhat diffident. It was decided for the time being to leave the bigger States, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner and Udaipur out and concentrate on the smaller States. 'Lop off the branches first and then we shall take care of the parent trunk, was more or less what Sardar told V. P. Menon. Consequently, a Union was formed with Kotah at the head; meanwhile the Maharana of Udaipur, perhaps the most progressive of the Rajasthan States under the enlightened administration headed by such notable *Dewans* as T. Vijayaraghavachariar and S. V. Ramamurthy and advised by K. M. Munshi, began to send feelers of his willingness to join the Union. The negotiations did not prove difficult despite S. V. Ramamurthy's obstinacy on some of the points and the second Union, superseding the first, was brought into being with the Maharana of Udaipur as *Rajpramukh* and the Maharaja of Kotah as the Senior *Up-Rajpramukh*. It was interesting to observe how the offer of such honorific titles dispelled resistance to these negotiations.

The most difficult and prolonged negotiations were held before the Union of Gwalior, Indore and Malwa States known as Madhya Bharat Union for short, could materialise. Sardar from the first had set his heart on the formation of this Union. He was convinced that this was the only solution to the problem which the country's 'intestinal tract' in this region presented. But the difficulty was that the two leading Houses—Gwalior and Indore—were age-old rivals and the Rulers were hardly on talking terms. Both States had advanced very far on the road to full responsible Government. The Maharaja of Gwalior was very popular in his State. His ability, personal approach to the needs of his people, his charm, industry and State-building policies and his exploits on the race-course had made him the idol of his people. Though the Ruler of Indore could never reach these heights of popularity, largely because of his foreign wives and his frequent sojourns abroad, he could nevertheless put forward his point of view with ability and vigour. Both the Rulers were supported fully in their claims to separate existence by their Chief Ministers, Liladhar Joshi and Khode; the latter was both shrewd and intelligent while the former though not so assertive was able and competent. However, the Congress parties of the two States were

not really coherent and homogenous bodies and it was not difficult to establish cores of dissent or persuade certain sections to see our point of view.

There was one great factor in our favour. While the Rulers generally held Sardar in awe and esteem, these two in particular stood in great fear of him. V.P. Menon as a rule successfully used the device of countering resistance or recalcitrance by the threat of taking them to Sardar. In the case of these two Rulers even that was not necessary ; a mere hint that the point might have to be referred to Sardar was sufficient to bring them round. V.P. Menon tried to convince the two Rulers that their separate existence had to be sacrificed in the larger interests of one Union. Also, Sarder in his discussion with other leaders had built up a core of supporters for one Union.

When the idea of one Union seemed to flounder on the rock of opposition, V.P. Menon fell in with the wishes of the two parties and began to work out a scheme of two Unions, one based on Gwalior and the other on Indore. Two local leaders—Vijayavargiya and Mashruwala—felt that V.P. Menon was on the wrong track and that Sardar's illness had made all the difference. They called me on the phone and said they wanted to see me urgently as otherwise matters might go too far. When they met me, they apprised me of the position. I undertook to speak to Sardar as they were apprehensive that the Covenants might be signed and we might be faced with accomplished facts. After lunch I went over to Sardar's residence and when he woke up after his afternoon nap, he, as was his wont, sent for me. When I entered, he found me somewhat grim and thoughtful. He asked me the reason why. I told him what I had heard from the two local leaders. I was not prepared for the explosion that followed. Whenever Sardar felt really incensed, his countenance assumed the visage of divine wrath. His eyes used to flash like lightning and sometimes one felt as if the opening of Shiva's third eye would follow. It was unnerving to anyone who be a witness to that flash of anger. He asked me in a harsh tone to send for Liladhar Joshi and Khode which I did. Both of them came posthaste not knowing what was in store for them. As soon as they came, Sardar gave them a piece of his mind in a manner which I had seldom seen before. He told them plainly that he would see to it that one Union was formed and that he would not tolerate any opposition to it. He appreciated their difficulties because of the rivalry of the two Ruling Houses. But he told them that they could easily leave these matters to him. He then peremptorily asked them to go and tell their Rulers that they would all have to sign on the basis of one Union. They accordingly repaired to the scene of negotiations and told V.P. Menon of the new basis on which discussions would have to be held. V.P. Menon was visibly annoyed but he had no alternative. Nor could the Rulers put up any further show of resistance and one Union came into being.

To my mind it was one of the most promising Unions, particularly in

view of the very generous transfer of funds to the new Union by the Ruler of Gwalior, His Highness Sir Jiyajirao Scindia. He had inherited from his father, who died while he was still a minor, a sound business acumen. He had a passion for detail. He was a good and charming friend, and I had the privilege of enjoying his warm friendship despite the fact that he regarded me as the one who had upset his apple-cart consisting of a separate Union—a charge which I hotly contested when I told him the facts. He was sporting enough to agree that I could not have done anything else. V.P. Menon was not, however, so forgiving. He came later in the evening to Sardar's residence, walking briskly with his visage showing signs of tension and anger. I was sitting in Sardar's drawing room; as soon as he beheld me he shouted, 'Shankar, what do you mean by letting the two Cheif Ministers see Sardar without informing me?' I quietly replied that I did not know if I had to take his approval before somebody met Sardar, particularly at the latter's instance. He exploded, saying that I should at least have informed him. I told him that things had taken such a swift course and Sardar was in an angry mood; I therefore did not wish to add fuel to the fire. The conversation was in a somewhat loud tone and Sardar sent Maniben to find out if V.P. Menon had come and then to send for him. Much to my relief that interruption put an end to what might have turned out to be an unpleasent experience. I did not join V.P. Menon and Sardar since I thought it would not be nice that Sardar should give him a scolding in my presence. For Sardar did get angry and the last I heard was V.P. Menon telling Sardar: 'Very well, Sir, I shall now make the Rulers sign on the basis of one Union'.

However, the Maharaja of Gwalior found himself in difficulties of a domestic nature. The Maharani, the present Rajmata, a very intelligent and educated lady, normally not interested in matters of State took exception to the loss of identity of the State and the extinction of the Maharaja's sovereignty. She was violently opposed to the scheme of one Union. His Highness explained to me his difficulty and I suggested that the best course would be for him to bring her to Sardar. He agreed and both were invited to a lunch with Sardar. At that lunch Sardar succeeded in scaling down her opposition and both of them left 1, Aurangzeb Road as reconciled to the inevitable as anybody in their position could have been. During the settlement of various thorny matters arising out of the rivalry between the two cities, Sardar took the view that both had to be given their due and although the major share went to Gwalior, Indore also continued to enjoy its position as a part-time seat of the Government and the legislature of the Union.

The recurrent news of these triumphs acted as a tonic to Sardar and his recovery and convalascence were satisfactory. We left for Dehra Dun and after a halt in the beautiful Circuit House, once a part-time residence of the Viceroys when they trekked to Simla via Chakrata while the Government moved from Delhi to Simla by road and rail, we left for

Mussoorie. In the meantime, the negotiations had been set afoot for the formation of the Patiala and East Punjab States Union. Everything centred round the Ruler of Patiala who had throughout taken a patriotic stand on the question of the entry of the States into the Constituent Assembly. He had taken over the Chancellorship of the Prince's Chamber from Bhopal after the latter had to resign for lack of support for his isolationist or separatist policy. The Maharaja was a sportsman *par excellence*, an able administrator and organiser and a soldier of distinction but a firm believer in personalised rule. He had a finger in every pie including the religious politics of the Sikhs in the Punjab and his main support was provided by Sardar Udham Singh Nagoke, a burly portentous figure but a nationalist among Sikhs. Sardar Baldev Singh was a rival contender for Akali support which he got because of his friendship with Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh, undoubtedly two of the foremost Sikh leaders. Both of them wanted Patiala and Punjab States to be merged in East Punjab in order to bolster up the percentage of Sikh population in the United Punjab. The Maharaja knew what this meant for him and not only studiously kept himself aloof from, but also opposed, this move.

None of the other Rulers counted for much. The negotiations had to be actively pursued with Patiala. Sardar had developed a soft corner for the Maharaja because of his help not only at the time of negotiations for entry into the Constituent Assembly but also in dealing with the Sikh *Jathedars* at Amritsar during his famous dash there in September 1947 to assure safe passage through the Punjab and the city of Amritsar in particular to the Muslim caravan proceeding to Pakistan. It was with the Maharaja's help that Sardar succeeded in getting the terrible confusion all along Rajpura to Patiala cleared before Nawabzada Iftikhar Uddin visited the holy Shrine of Rosa Sharif. At a critical time, it was through his efforts that we were able to raise almost over-night two battalions from among ex-servicemen in his State. Sardar therefore found no difficulty in conceding his pre-eminence among the Rulers concerned and the Maharaja fully reciprocated his gesture. But unfortunately the local *Praja Mandal* led by Brish Bhan did not realise the significance of the times nor the impact of Sikh politics on the political set-up in the new Union and decided to stay out unless it was given a pivotal position. Matters came to a head in July on the return of Sardar from Dehra Dun when he went to Patiala to inaugurate the Union. Sardar knew that in course of time, desire for the plums of office would remove any stumbling-blocks to the swearing-in of a popular Ministry. He, therefore, gave the oath of office to the *Rajpramukh* and *Up Rajpramukh* only at the time of the inauguration. When subsequently the parties still persisted in a negative role he had a caretaker regime installed under Gian Singh Rarewala, then in the confidence of the Rulers of Patiala.

Sardar's visit to Mussoorie brought about something of a set-back in his health. The altitude was too much for him; his heart felt the strain

and his pulse-rate increased. The only momentous event that occurred during his month's stay there was a conference of businessmen, called at Birla House in the Happy Valley, where he was staying to raise funds for the Memorial to Gandhiji. Efforts to raise funds had not met with success and it was considered that only Sardar's powers of persuation prevail with the business community. Accordingly, the Conference was convened there it was attended by Pandit Nehru, Acharya Kripalani the Congress President at the time, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and other notables as well as business magnates. The meeting responded nobly to Sardar's appeal and very handsome donations were given by the business community and others. This became the core of the Gandhi Memorial Fund. Sardar had earlier, soon after the first exodus of refugees from the Punjab, established a Punjab Refugees Relief Fund to which substantial contributions had been made and which was put to good use in resetting the refugees.

By this time the relations between the Congress President and Pandit Nehru had become strained particularly because the Organisation was hardly allowed to have a say in the affairs of the Government whether at the Centre or in the States. At the Centre the combination of Pandit Nehru and Sardar was too much for the Congress President and so far as the Chief Ministers except for Profulla Ghosh who was Acharya's protege were concerned they looked to the two leaders for inspiration and guidance. The Congress President, Acharya Kripalani, thus found himself completely neglected and frustrated. Sardar and he had been very good friends since the beginning of their political career together with the Mahatma. During his election for Congress Presidentship, the brunt of the work fell on Sardar and when it was found that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was actively trying to stage a come-back it was to Sardar that Mrs. Sucheta Kripalani turned for counter-measures. The estrangement between himself and Acharya Kripalani was causing him a great deal of sorrow. But the reasons were obvious. Sardar could not have accommodated Acharya Kripalani without abandoning Pandit Nehru. Apart from this, Sardar felt that with a full-fledged Parliamentary programme in action, the leader of the Government could not have twin loyalties to both the Parliamentary Party and the Organisation. Much to Acharya's chagrin, Sardar stood by Pandit Nehru in this controversy.

He had not to wait long for retribution. The Punjab Relief Fund provided the *casus belli*. Acharya Kripalani claimed the transfer of the Fund to the A.I.C.C. as it had been collected in response to the appeal made by Sardar by virtue of his position in the Congress hierarchy. Sardar claimed that it had been subscribed to in response to his personal appeal. This led to some acrimonious correspondence whereafter Sardar decided to end the matter by transferring the Fund to the A.I.C.C. though physically the accounts and the fund still remained with him. Needless to say, hardly anything was added to the Fund thereafter.

By the time Sardar returned from Dehra Dun in July, the differences

between Pandit Nehru and Acharya Kripalani had reached breaking point and Acharya felt compelled to resign. The Jaipur session of the Congress was scheduled for December 1948 and the question arose as to who should be the Congress President. Two candidates were in the field—Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Purshottam Das Tandon. Of the two, the former had undoubtedly been more in the forefront of Congress politics and had been proposed for Congress Presidentship as early as 1938 at the Tripuri Congress when he was defeated by Subhas Chandra Bose. His defeat had caused both a sensation and a crisis and led to the exit of Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress scene. Purshottam Das Tandon had made a name for himself in U.P. where he was the President of the Provincial Congress Committee and Speaker of the U.P. Assembly. He was highly respected in his own Province and in Bihar and the Punjab in which he had a number of adherents due to his presidentship of the Servants of the People Society, founded by the late Lala Lajpat Rai.

Despite the fact that both he and Purshottam Das Tandon had been very good friends, Pandit Nehru was opposed to Tandon for his Hindi fanaticism and what he called his communal outlook as well as his odd ways. Sardar, however, felt that he would make a good Congress President and that it was time some younger elements from northern India were at the helm of Congress affairs. For the first time after Gandhiji's death both the leaders came to have irreconcilable views. However, both decided not to lend support to either of them and let the democratic process of election take its course. But during the election process disturbing news came to Sardar from various quarters that though Pandit Nehru was not himself canvassing for either of the candidates he was indicating his support for Pattabhi Sitaramayya in private discussion. To cap it all, however, there came into his possession a letter issued by G. Ramachandran from Trivandrum appealing for support to Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the name of Pandit Nehru. In spite of this, Sardar would not take any active line. The result was that Pattabhi Sitaramayya was elected by a small majority. When he came to see Sardar after his election he sought his blessings which he gave without any mental reservation. When Pattabhi Sitaramayya laid down the reins of office he openly stated that Sardar fully lived upto his assurance of support to him, notwithstanding Tandon's defeat. Similar was the case with Bhim Sen Sachar, who came to receive Sardar's blessing after toppling Gopi Chand Bhargava with the help of Giani Kartar Singh at a meeting of the Punjab Legislature Party. While giving his blessing and assurances of support, Sardar warned him, however, that it would not be long before he would have to step down the very same ladder by which he had climbed up. Lo and behold, within six months Sardar's prophecy had been fulfilled! But during this period, not once did he withhold his assistance and co-operation to Bhim Sen Sachar during his administration of a very difficult Province.

Fourteen

Looking Back : Some Highlights

THE YEARS 1947 and 1948 were a witness to the country's quick recovery and progress. For Sardar, it was a busy time. His days were filled with work. He had to bear not only the taxing burden of political developments after the entry of the League into the Government but also that of the reorganisation of the Administrative and Police Services consequential to the termination of the Secretary of State Services. Moreover with commendable foresight he had the State Armed Police reorganised and strengthened. This came in handy during the troubled times of pre-Partition and post-Partition communal disturbances. His differences with Pandit Nehru and Gandhiji had cast a visible shadow on his features which bore an unusual grim look. The assassination of Gandhiji, the shock of which he bore with outward stoicism but inward consuming grief, caused him deep mental anguish. Yet, through all this he attended to and successfully dealt with proplems bristling with complexities such as those of Partitions, accession and integration of States, preservation of law and order, reorganisation of laws, finances and administration of merged States and of Unions of Indian States, the expansion of All India Radio, the controversial issue of the language problems of All India Radio, the almost day-to-day development in constitution-making and the reorganisation of the administrative structure of the country.

At the same time, he had to devote himself to a multiplicity of problems on the organisational side of the Congress party. Acharya Kripalani as President of the Congress had to be reckoned with. The relations between him and Pandit Nehru became strained and he eventually resigned. Chronic rivalries in the Bengal Congress manifested themselves between Prafulla Ghosh and B. C. Roy. The former was the protege of Acharya Kripalani and suffered an exit. In U. P. the clashed between the minority group led by Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and the large majority group led by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Purshottam Das Tandon were frequently in the news. With his closeness to Panditji and also due to the position he built up for himself, Rafi shone in U. P. politics. In the Punjab the rivalry between Gopi Chand Bhargava and Sardar Partap Singh and Bhim Sen Sachar gave rise to many problems. The Sikh members under Sardar Baldev Singh played their own game. In Assam differences developed between Gopinath Bardoloi and Bishnuram Medhi ; the problems of Muslim immigrants and Assamese antipathy to Bengalis occasionally raised their heads. In Bihar,

group rivalry between Shri Krishna Sinha and Anugrah Narain Sinha was a marked feature of local Congress politics. Only Madras under Kamaraj, Bombay under the joint rule of B. G. Kher and Morarji Desai with S. K. Patil, Sardar's close lieutenant, as the undisputed leader of Bombay City and Central Provinces under the joint rule of Ravi Shankar Shukla and Dwarka Prasad Misra presented a picture of unity and peace. Sardar as undisputed leader of the Congress on the organisational side and also as Deputy Prime Minister was constantly in touch both with heads of provincial Ministries and of provincial Congress Committees. Sometimes during the day put invariably in the evening he would telephone the Chief Minister of some or other of the Provinces to get an account of the day's important happenings. Through a careful study of newspapers from all over the country and daily intelligence and fortnightly Provincial Government reports, Sardar was always thoroughly conversant with events and developments occurring all over the country. Not infrequently it was he who posed the problems of the day to the Chief Ministers. Likewise, due to his daily contacts with Ministers and officials generally of the level of Secretaries and Heads of Departments, he was sometimes more familiar with the important happening in the Departments than the Minister-in-Charge. This sometimes led the Ministers to suspect that he was being fed with information by their Secretaries without reference to them.

Through these daily or frequent contacts with the Chief Ministers and Presidents of Provincial Congress Committees and Ministers and officials of the Central Government he exercised a general superintendence, direc'ion and control which the Secretaries of State for India or the Viceroys of the past would have envied. The clarity of his mind, the directness of his approach, the brevity of his instructions and his quick grasp of a situation made these telephonic discussions the most effective, and efficient means of disposing off important business. His correspondence with them on important affairs of State used to supplement these discussions. The prestige that he commanded and the awe and reverence with every one of them looked up to him often secured instant obedience and compliance.All of them would enter his presence in a posture of instinctive submission ; even such a stalwart as Govind Ballabh Pant would bend down in salutation as soon as he entered the drawing room. It often happend that he and some others would keep back a topic when they found Sardar's first reaction somewhat adverse; they would then leave papers with me after explaining the case and tell me to put them up to him when he was more relaxed or in a batter frame of mind.

When Sardar took on the portfolio of Information and Broadcasting he was convinced of the need for expansion. When he assumed office there were broadcasting stations only at important provincial headquarters apart from Delhi. The finances of the time would not allow for rapid expansion which was the need of the hour. At the same time, we had succeeded to the legacy of vast amounts of wartime stores which were awaiting disposal. Sardar on the recommendation of the Director-General

of A.I.R. P.C. Chaudhuri decided to start new Stations with 1 kw sets. The honour of being the first station of this type went to Patna which he inagurated on 26 January 1948. Simultaneously, considerable expansion took place in the distribution of community sets to villages. Sardar's association with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting came to an end late in 1948 with the appointment of R.R. Diwakar as Minister of State.

Sardar's formative role in constitution-making is no less important than his role in Government. In the very early stages when the League was still out though it was reaping the benefits of being in it by its participation in Government, Sardar had been elected as the Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Constituent Assembly on fundamental Rights and Minorities. He was also a member of the Negotiating Committee which was set up by the Assembly to negotiate with the corresponding Committee of Indian States the details of the entry of their representatives in the Constituent Assembly. As Chairman of the Advisory Committee he had to deal with the reports of the Sub-Committees on Fundamental Rights and Minorities. He was also Chairman of the Provincial Constitution Committee. In these various capacities he was busy often day in and day out, guiding their deliberations from about March to August 1947 and subsequently from May 1949 onwards. The records of the deliberations of these Committees fully bear out not only his full participation but also his decisive influence on various occasions. They also bring to light his uncanny method of not imposing his will and yet carrying everyone, as far as possible, with him. Of these, his most significant contribution was on the question of Fundamental Rights and Minorities and regarding the latter subject on the question of reservation of seats for them. This had been agreed to in August 1947 but in view of the changed circumstances the special Committee which was appointed under his Chairmanship was able to recommend unanimously that the scheme of reservations be dropped except for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

He came specially from Dehra Dun to pilot the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on this thorny question. He moved for the acceptance of the recommendations on 25 May 1949, and replied to the debate on it the next day. The two speeches he made rank among some of the best he delivered. The second was in particular a masterpiece of effective sarcasm and commanding persuasiveness. It created such a great impression on the Constituent Assembly that he virtually lifted the audience off its feet and there was an exhibition of enthusiasm and applause which that august body never again witnessed in its history. The speeches put into cerrect perspective some of his views on the position of Muslims, for which he was then and even now, to my mind, unfairly criticised.

In this connection I would like to cite an outstanding example of Sardar's catholicity of views. Soon after Independence the question of publicity programmes and the media of publicity came up. There was

considerable organised opposition to the idea of publicity in Urdu and even the Department was divided in its approach. Sardar took the view that such an important sector of the nation as the Urdu-speaking population could not be neglected; he refused to accept the view that it was the language of Muslims only and approved the plan of a regular Urdu magazine which was named *Ajkal*. The search for an Editor of the Journal began. We were lucky in getting two persons on the Editorial Board from among the refugees from Pakistan—Pandit Balmukund 'Arsh' Malsiani and Jagannath Azad, both poets of merit in their own right and sons of two renowned poets Joshi Malsiani and the late Tarlok Chand 'Mahroom'. But the leader of the team had to be found. Those days *Shaer-o-Inqilab* (The Poet of Revolution) Josh Malihabadi was on the unemployed list. He was noted for his leftist views and on that ground a *persona non grata* so far as Government service was concerned. At the same time there was no doubt about his outstanding merit not only as a poet but also as a scholar, philosopher and thinker. He was equally at home in the use of Urdu diction and Hindi words and imagery For sheer appropriateness of words smiles and metaphors and profoundity of thought he had no equal. Only his contemporary Jigar Moradabadi could claim to be his peer but that too in the restricted field of *ghazal*.

Sarojini Naidu then Governor of U P. sponsored him but not being sure of Sardar's reaction and knowing my devotion to Urdu mentioned his name to me when I accompanied Sardar on a tour to Lucknow early in January 1948. With a great deal of diffidence I agreed to have his name put up When the proposal was mooted in the Department by Azim Hussain who was then Deputy Secretary it encountered the opposition of the Secretary N.C. Mehta who was Deputy Commissioner in my District when I was at school and whom I knew very well. But as was my practice I did not try to influence his judgement. When the papers came to Sardar I apprised him of the merit as well as the political aspects of the case. He asked me whether there was any danger of Josh Malihabadi transgressing the obligation imposed on Government servants to be non-political. I told him that so far as I could vouch for him on Mrs. Naidu's assurance there was no such risk and even if he did do so, he could be suitably dealt with. He then asked me to recite some samples of his poetry; I did so, selecting the simpler ones which Sardar could easily understand. Thereafter he gave his approval to the proposal. But N.C. Mehta was not in favour of the appointment and orders were not issued for some months. One day, Sardar suddenly remembered the case and asked me if Josh Malihabadi had joined. On hearing that he had not, he called for N.C. Mehta and asked him why orders had been delayed. Mehta said that he wanted to discuss the matter but somehow the case was lost sight of—not an unfamiliar excuse in official ecperience. Sardar lost his tamper and gave him a scolding. Mehta took his leave crest-fallen and had the orders issued forthwith. He had later to pay for it by being asked to quit and go as Chief Commissioner of Himachal.

Sardar conceived his policy of integration of States in all its aspects and was not content with mere political or structural or territorial unity. While integration and democratisation were his watchwords, the improvement of judicial, financial and general administration constituted an indispensable feature of his policy. As soon as the problem of integration had been successfully tackled he would discuss the administrative problems of the State or newly formed Union and virtually lay down an outline of the reforms that had to be introduced, and the Indian laws that had to be adopted. In this respect valuable experience was gained in Saurashtra which posed some of the most intricate and variegated problems of integration and administrative, legislative and financial assimilation that were ever presented. So far as the merged States were concerned the problem was not difficult; they were placed either under Central or Provincial rule and it was easy to apply the relevant laws or to absorb them into the Central or Provincial pattern or system. Moreover there were no popular Ministries with interest confirmed to the States whose notions of prestige, sensitiveness or refusal to admit their inadequacies had to be taken into account. But the position was different in the Unions which had newly form d Ministries that claimed popular backing and support. Sardar's mind was however clear and he regarded a period of transitional tutelage as indispensable. He was convinced that it was necessary in the interests of the States themselves apart from the fact that it would result in the betterment of the people, he felt that the new entities could not afford either the administrative personnel required in the higher categories or the requisite political talent. He therefore decided upon retaining the powers of superintendence, direction and control exercised the Centre on these new Units and also securing the deputation of officers from the Centre or the Provinces to fill important posts, e. g. Advisers, Chief Secretary, Finance Secretary, Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General of Police of the High Court. The Chief Ministers and the Ministers of these new Units, in their anxiety for an unbridled exercise of new-found authority and powers were resentful of these 'impositions' but Sardar was adamant. The resentment became vocal at a Conference of Chief Ministers of newly-formed Unions particularly against the system of Advisers who had the right to advice on important matters, attend Cabinet Meetings and in the event of any difference of opinion to have the case referred to the Ministry of States for instructions. V. P. Menon, who was at the time Adsiser to the Ministry of States was unable to calm them down. The meeting was held in Sardar's drawing room. Sardar joined the meeting after his post-lunch rest and after he heard from Menon a brief account of the discussion on the subject he turned to the Chief Ministers and told them somewhat as follows: 'I find you people are not in need of advice. You are of course wiser than I am. I need an Adviser to teach me wisdom whereas you can do without one.' The murmur subsided and everyone accepted the system, making a virtue of necessity.

An event of special significance during this period was the resignation of R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, Finance Minister. His selection as Finance Minister, notwithstanding his ealier association with the policies of the British Government in India was a tribute alike to his own abilities and to the liberal spirit with which Pandit Nehru and Sardar approached the problem of Cabinet formation This was to my mind, a signal contribution of Sardar to the ensuring of a spirit of national interprise which in the circumstances was not only an instrument of inspiring confidence but an essential strategy to keep the country together during the early stages of the consolidation of our freedom. The Finance Ministry was always considered by Sardar as a key Department of the Government of India and he was always insistent that, irrespective of party affiliations, India should have as Finance Minister someone whose knowledge and ability would instil confidence in the country and in internal and external financial circules. He felt that at that stage of our national finance when we had to deal with important financial questions arising out of post-war problems and nation-building policies of Government, the need for creating such a climate of investment and confidence was paramount. Shanmukham Chetty started very well but tripped up on a very sensitive issue. The Liaquat Ali Khan budget contained a proposal for the setting up of an Income-tax Investigation Commission to go into the problems and cases of tax evasion particularly by big businessmen. Chetty withdrew from the purview of that Commission, so far as I recalled five cases which included some of the big houses of industry of Bombay, Delhi, Ahmedabad and Calcutta. This was done without reference to the Cabinet and without the knowledge of either Pandit Nehru or Sardar. When the news spread it created a furore in the Congress Party. Pandit Nehru and Sardar conferred with each other and it was decided that they would stand by Chetty if he had, as he assured them, acted on the advice of his Department. K R.K. Menon was then the Finance Secretary and before Sardar went to attend the Party meeting in the Parliament House he was called in with the file. It then transpired that actually the official view was opposed to withdrawal and that the proposal emanated from Chetty himself. As soon as Sardar came to know of it, he sent for Chetty and told him that in the circumstances he could not support him. Pandit Nehru also agreed and Chetty had to resign and was succeeded, not without some persuation, by John Mathai, the the Railways and Transport Minister.

As the year 1948 drew to a close, the country which was threatened with balkanisation only during the previous year, and which, the prophets of doom foretold, would lapse into anarchy, chaos and disorder after the British left, had staged a remarkable recovery and settled down to an unprecedented period of reconstruction. The wounds of Partition were well on the way healing; law and order had prevailed for more than a year; organisationally the Congress had withstood the tragic shock of Gandhiji's death; and the country had also survived that tremendous

jolt. With remarkable speed, bringing into play his rare gifts of statesmanship and liberalism and appealing on the attractive plank of patriotism and sense of duty, Sardar had first drawn the Rulers into the scheme of accession and then persuaded them to accept his policy of democratisation and integration. Virtually a peaceful revolution was taking place and the whole country was reverberating with the new spirit of integration and unity. Pakistan's threat to cause disintegration through the accession of Junagadh had been successfully countered and the dream of the *Nizam* and his Muslim subjects to secure independence had been shattered. Barring the problem of Kashmir, practically every problem, internal or external had been reasonably settled. Food procurement prices still posed a serious problem and the experiment of decontrol had failed. But the country was pulling through and there was no danger of economic collapse. In fact, with huge sterling balances on one side and increasing industrial and trading activity on the other, the country had a happier outlook than was visualised at the time the decision to accept Partition was taken. In foreign affairs, Pandit Nehru's personality and policies introduced a new and significant factor and the world had to take note of it. The foundations of our diplomatic system were being well and truly laid and there was no doubt that the prestige of the country was very high.

The only significant failure was in respect of the Kashmir problem—a very difficult one both internally and externally with personal, communal, and emotional complications. The fanatic 'Islamic' sentiment in Pakistan had set its heart on securing Kashmir as an essential unit of that State. Liaquat Ali Khan had gone so far as to threaten, before the Radcliffe Award was given, that if Gurdaspur was given to India it would constitute an unfriendly act. League circles were confdent that the isolation of the State from India would bring the prize within their grasp. Their attempt to acquire a foothold through the acceptance of a standstill agreement offered by the Maharaja had not borne fruit. The strangulation of the State's economy by a virtual economic blockade had also failed to bring the Maharaja to submission. The hymn of hate openly sung all over Pakistan during the carnage of August-October 1947 had failed to yield any results. In the circumstances, flushed with the certainty of success, spurred by an urge for quick results, motivated by greed and a desire for acquisition, Pakistan decided to launch tribal raids on the State hoping that India would not be able to pull the State of that predicament. But all these hopes were falsified; while one-third of the State was grabbed by Pakistan, two-thirds remained intact. However, as sometimes happens, in the hour of triumph, one becomes less circumspect and calculating and three errors of judgement were committed in the handling of the problem. One was the commitment to hold a plebiscite under U.N. auspices; the second was the payment of Rs 55 crores to Pakistan, and the third was the reference of the Kashmir dispute to the United Nations. It is a tragic fact that in all three matters the moving spirit was Lord Mountbatten, the constitutional Governor-General of the Indian

Dominion. The facts relating to all these three matters have been told earlier. However, it is unfortunate that his advice was accepted by the Government of India, and the primary responsibility must remain with the latter. Once the problem got involved in the power politics of the United Nations and had to be sorted out in a forum where the U.K.'s bias towards Pakistan was in full play and the U S A.'s dependence on the U.K.'s advice a damaging feature, it was inevitable that the solution of the problem would defy time and ingenuity. Though militarily we were able to retrieve the situation and internally we were able to get the popular administration going, externally we failed to extricate it from the entanglements of international diplomatic manoeuvres.

Fortunately, Sardar was able to avoid the consequences of similar advice in regard to Junagadh and similar interventions in regard to Hyderabad In Junagadh, Sardar did consult public opinion, the verdict of which was in favour of his stand. As regards Hyderabad he did not hesitate to use the scalpel to revive that part of the country's structure. But we saved ourselves from disaster by the skin of our teenth; the *Nizam's* emissaries were already on the way to place the case before the United Nations and securities worth Rs 20 crores were in the hands of Pakistan for the purpose.

To my mind, these were the only blemishes in Lord Mountbatten's career as Viceroy and Governor-General of India both before and after Independence. When he left India in the middle of 1948 after nearly fifteen months' stay in the country, it was after having accomplished much more than any of his predecessors, during four times that period. He did not make a good start, for which he could not be blamed; he failed to sell the Cabinet Mission Plan to the League. Even as early as late April 1947, a month after his arrival, he had confessed to Sardar his failure in the attempt. Hodson has stated in his Book *The Great Divide* that when Sardar referred to the fact that the Secretary of State's Services would not be transferred to India until June 1948, Lord Mountbatten stated that since it was now highly doubtful that there would be a united India, he did not see to whom the Secretary of State's Services could be justifiably transferred. In fact, about that time he had formed his plan to transfer authority to the Provinces in the absence of an agreement between the League and the Congress about a Central authority. The plan might have gone through, plunging the whole country in a welter of blood consequential to a civil war, in which I have no doubt that the armed forces would have got involved. But the foresight of Sardar and V. P. Menon who were ready with an alternative which kept more than two-thirds of the country intact, forstalled it.

Once that plan was found acceptable, it is to the credit of Mountbatten that he saw it through with his drive, energy, gifts of organisation and statesmanship, his talent for establishing rapport and his supremely able direction of affairs. Also as one who often saw him in action at close quarters and who at the same time saw the state of Congress and League

politics, Pandit Nehru and Sardar included, I can confidently assert that but for Lord Mountbatten, the 3rd June Plan could not have gone through with such speed and efficiency and the many knotty problems which arose out of the Plan complicated by the distance and hostility which separated the leaders of the two Parties would not have been solved on the whole so amicably. One had to see in order to believe the hatred and hostility which had gone deep into the psyche of members of the three communities. To one like myself, who had been brought up in an atmosphere of brotherly and neighbourly relations with Muslims and who had treated Muslim elders in his town on a par with Hindu elders, according to them the same reverence including touching of their feet, all this was such an anathema. Every move that Sardar made to protect the lives of Muslims filled me with admiration and joy. Some of these accounts I have given earlier. To succeed, in the prevailing atmosphere, in having all issue resolved without arbitration, for which provision had been made, is an achievement worthy of the heroes of history. I would gladly accord Lord Mountbatten a place among those heroes for his achievements despite the constraints of the times and of human frailties.

It is true that the operation cost both the Dominions millions of lives and a wholesale dislocation of people on both sides of the boundary and that his solution of a Boundary Force failed to click. But I would not hold this against him. If he had prolonged the operation the bloodshed would have been more, not less and his solution was the only one that could have been adopted with any chance of success. The blame rests with those who generated the poison that went so deep. The whole population and the whole countryside were on fire; 'men were not men and law was not law'; 'judgement had fled to brutish beasts and men had lost their reason'. Such bestiality is not unknown to history. I saw wholesale scenes of carnage, the slaughter of innocents, rotting corpses in the streets of Delhi and in the countryside, along roads and railway lines; I drove through burning houses and villages. I could detect blood in the eyes of uprooted men, women and children. It is only those who have witnessed these scenes and lived through these times who can appreciate the difficulty of controlling the situation through the disrupted forces of law and order that were available. I would even go so far as to say that no one else but Lord Mountbatten could have prevented the mischief and that but for his supreme leadership even Panditji and Sardar would have failed to control the situation in Delhi and its environs.

Even if Lord Mountbatten failed on certain occasions and in respect of certain problems, he more than atoned for these failures by one supreme act of service—the part he played in securing the accession of Indian States to the Indian Dominion. It is divine grace which helped the last Viceroy to bring about a fusion which preceding Viceroys and officials of the Political Department had been instrumental in preventing and which his immediate predecessor had failed to bring about due to complete lack of a personal touch and due to his own pomposity and stand-offishness.

Even though the ground had been prepared in informal discussions with the Rulers by Sardar, the fact remains that it was Lord Mountbatten who successfully and skilfully herded them into the accession lobby. It was an achievement calling for the greatest gifts of persuasion and statesmanship. In the process he adroitly used the weakness of the Rulers in general for the representative of the Crown with whom they had had their relationship hitherto. Altogether it was a magnificent effort justifying an everlasting niche in the Hall of Fame.

During his Governor-Generalship, Lord Mountbatten was instrumental in preventing many a national catastrophe but the two for which I would give him the greatest credit were the advice he tendered to Gandhiji to prevent Sardar from leaving the Cabinet and the manner in which he brought Sardar and Pandit Nehru together soon after Gandhiji's death. This is not the place to enter into the speculative field of the 'ifs' of history but I am certain that if Sardar had left the Cabinet in January 1948 or if the two had parted company, the country would have suffered a loss from which recovery would have been most difficult and the history of the next three years, full of achievements in diverse fields of national activity, would have been diametrically opposite to what it proved to be. In fact a reversal of the events of these three formative years of consolidation would have left their dark imprints on the course of history in subsequent years.

It is the memory of these signal services and not the failures of Mountbatten that lingers in my mind as I write these reminiscences. My mind turns to Lady Mountbatten, that gracious lady who never hesitated to apply the soothing balm to the aches of the mind which at times affected the leading personalities, and whose mission of mercy during those days touched the hearts of the people. She was an invaluable support to Lord Mountbatten in fulfilling many of his onerous responsibilities. She was endowed not only with a rare charm of personality but also with a gift of understanding which made everyone feel at ease. Like Stevenson's happy men or woman, her entrance into a room was as though another candle had been lit. Sardar was fond of both of them and it was with a heavy heart that he bade them farewell at Dehra Dun on 13 June 1948 and gave Lord Mountbatten the parting gift of his acquiescence in his plan for the solution of the Hyderabad problem, even against his own better judgement. It was a gift which Lord Mountbatten greatly valued but which would have proved disastrous for the country if the *Nizam* had accepted the Plan. Like Article 371 of the Constitution in respect of Kashmir it would have been a halter round India's neck for quite a long time to come.

During 1948, two problems with dangerous possibilities had also been successfully tackled. One was the R.S.S. movement which despite its attractive programme for the organisation and uplift of Hindu society had unfortunately come under suspicion for activities calculated to promote communal violence. It did not pose a threat of any serious dimensions as it was a disciplined organisation patterned after the structure of the Police

with drills etc., rather than on military lines. It was the belief that the injection of that organisation with the communal virus had led to the serious incidents in 1947 and the association of some of the persons implicated in Gandhiji's assassination with it culminated in its being declared unlawful But in the end it reverted to its Constructive role, acquired a written constitution and settled down to peaceful pursuits.

The second problem was the militant Akali Dal under the leadership of Master Tara Singh on the whole a difficult person to deal with to whom argument, experience and reason had no appeal against his own obstinacy and perversity. Despite Sardar' sclear warning that he would rue everything with his destructive tactics, he persisted into this relentless course which led him unmistakably to the only destination it could, namely a prison house. Sobered and disillusioned by the lack of response from his followers and disappointed by the huge reception which Sardar received during his visit to Ambala, he left the precincts of the Almora Jail, a sadder and for the time being, a wiser man.

It was with a sense of fulfilment and achievement and loaded with general approbation and recognition by the country that Sardar went to Jaipur to attend the Congress Session under the Presidentship of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. There is no doubt that Sardar was the hero of that Session and he received a grand ovation as he participated in the debate on the resolution according approval to his policy of integration. The Congress generally hailed the achievements of the First National Government during the short period of eighteen months; there was much to regret as well but the sorrow and grief were submerged under a feeling of relief at the avoidance of disasters which threatened the country and joy and pleasure at the glory and greatness it had achieved at home and abroad. The Congress Session was a fitting climax to an *annus mirabilis*. However, little did the audience know that was not going to be the only year of its kind. The New Year held promises of greater glories to come.

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